

This is not another pop quiz,
I promise,
but I am wondering if anyone knows
the two main components that
make up the mass.

Here's a hint - it's not what you might think,
looking at the bulletin or the Prayer Book.
Anyone?

The Prayer Book divisions,
are The Liturgy of the Word
and The Holy Communion.
We move from one to the other
at the exchange of the Peace.

The two pieces I'm talking about are
the Propers and the Ordinary.
Anyone familiar with those terms?
What do they mean?

The Ordinary is the part of the service
That generally stays the same
from week to week -
The Creed, the Prayers of the People,
The Eucharistic Canon itself,
although with our current Prayer Book,
we have options for almost all of that.

The Propers are those pieces
that change every Sunday,
they are proper for the day
or the season,
and there are three components
to the Propers for any given occasion.

(This does not include hymns, by the by)

Anyone know what makes up
The Propers?

The Readings,
The Collect of the Day,
Those are the easy bits, and?
The Proper Preface.

I *almost always preach
on the appointed Gospel for the day.
Almost always.
Sometimes I'll turn to one
of the other lessons,
and every once in a while,
I'll abandon the Propers altogether,
if circumstances warrant.

But sometimes, it's The Collect of the Day.
that really speaks to me.
It's the prayer right before we sit down,
right before we hear the lessons.
I wonder how often we really hear it.

Today marks
the Last Sunday after the Epiphany,
so we are at a transition,
leaving behind a season of revelation,
and moving into the penitential
season of Lent.

Our services after this Sunday
will be very different than
what we've been doing -

We forego completely the use
of the word Alleluia -
so soak it up today.

The colors of the church change;
in place of the *Gloria*
we sing the *Kyrie* -
Greek for "Lord have mercy."

We'll switch to the language of Rite I,
And even the dismissal will change,
but we'll talk about that later.

The Gospel for this Sunday
is always the story of
The Transfiguration -
Jesus appears on the mountain
with Moses and Elijah,
and his appearance is
dramatically altered.

The Collect for today,
sets it up for us -
what we are going to hear,
but also why we are hearing it,
and what's coming next.

Listen to that Collect again,
"Grant that we,
beholding by faith the light
of his countenance,
may be strengthened
to bear our cross."

We are given this glimpse
of Jesus in glory -
what will be his resurrected glory -
That we may be given
what we need,
for the journey ahead,
strength and courage to walk with him
along the way to the cross.

I know some of you
are disappointed that I asked us
not to add the "Alleluias"
to the dismissal every Sunday.

I understand it's joyful and all,
but that practice is reserved only
for the Great 50 Days of Easter.
Alleluia is an Easter shout of joy,
and while we do say that word
for most of the Sundays in
the Church year,

Only during Easter season,
is Alleluia both the first
and last word of the liturgy.
Easter reminds us,
That God always gets the last word,
and that word is always a word of
triumph, of resurrection.

There's a case to be made,
that every Sunday is like

a little Easter,
and that's true
Every Sunday is *like a little Easter;
it isn't actually Easter, though.

In other words,
every Sunday is *a Day of Resurrection,
but it isn't *The Day of Resurrection.

What's also true,
although we don't like to talk
about this near as much,
is that every Sunday is also
a Day of the Cross.

Christians have a tendency
to want to skip the business
of the cross,
and jump ahead to the joy
of the Resurrection,
but that isn't how it works.

The Resurrection needs the cross,
as that is where resurrection
draws its deepest meaning.

Our reading today started
with these words,
"Six days later...,"
but we don't get what came before.

The verses we didn't hear today,
have the Confession of S Peter,
when he names Jesus as
the Messiah,
the Son of the Living God.

That's followed by Jesus
telling them about his own death -
which they do not like at all.
Never, Lord, says Peter,
This shall never happen to you!

We've tried to avoid facing the cross,
before it ever even happened.

But it must, Jesus tells them,
and then warns them
that if they want to be his disciples,
they must take up their own cross,
and walk the path with him.

Like the disciples,
we, too, are warned about
the cost of following Jesus,
and then today shown a promise
of the glory that awaits
those who will
walk in the way of the cross,

Just in time for us to decide,
as we will on Ash Wednesday,
whether we will commit ourselves again
to following Jesus,
to accepting the cost,
to bearing our own cross,

Or whether we will try to avoid it,
to tell ourselves
that we can just skip ahead to Easter,
and leave behind all this foolishness
about the cross,
as Paul called it.

There's a reason why churches
are near full on Easter Day,
and much more empty
on Good Friday.

We want the celebration,
the joy, the glory;
we would just prefer,
if it could come without
all the suffering and death.

It should be clear, though,
that there is no escaping
suffering and death,
not in this world,
not in this life.

That's why we have the Transfiguration,

and why we get that glimpse today,
just before Lent begins,
to strengthen us to answer
the call of Jesus,

To accept and understand
that while suffering and death
are necessary parts of the journey,
in the end,
the power of death does not hold.

It is through the cross
on Good Friday
*and the empty tomb
on Easter morning,
that God triumphs over death.

Both are essential,
and to try to have the one
without facing the other,
is the very essence of cheap grace.

Today, Jesus reveals
the glory of his resurrection,
for just a moment,
to empower us to follow
him on the only way
that leads to the fullest
revelation of who he is -

The Messiah,
the Son of the Living God.

If we go back to the
Collect of the Day,
but this time read through
to the end, we see it there.

That beholding by faith,
the light of his countenance,
we are strengthened
to bear our cross,
so that, at the last,
we may be changed fully
into his likeness,
from glory to glory.