

Footstep #36 The Catholic Mass and the Luther Mass

Luther began in 1523 to make some minimal changes to the Catholic Mass. Luther strongly believed in the power of public worship and restored the emphasis of the early Church in receiving the Lord's Supper as an act of thanksgiving and an experience of uniting in fellowship with the community of all God's forgiven saints. However, the worshipping community of Wittenberg was dominated by merchants and peasants who might understand the reception of bread and wine but would require an explanation as to the purpose of the liturgy.

Luther translated the liturgy into German, with the exception of the Kyrie eleison," (Lord, have mercy). Most sections of the Catholic Mass were maintained including the elevation of the elements of the sacrament. The Lutheran mass included more participation by the congregation, the reading of the Scripture, and instruction through the sermon.

The biggest and most controversial change was with introducing music. Thomas Munster and the Anabaptists opposed music because it was not mentioned in Scripture. In fact, Munster stated that Paul in Ephesians 5:19, Paul strictly forbids music, "***Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***" Again, Paul wrote in Colossians 3:16, "***Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.***"

However, Luther saw the opportunity in public worship to instruct, inspire, and celebrate with God's Word, the sermon, prayer, the sacrament, and some liturgical forms. Luther gave back to the people their right to actively participate in worship as the priesthood of all believers. The worship experience for the Protestant is powerful although often viewed as undisciplined by Roman Catholics.

"I have no use for cranks who despise music, because it is a gift of God. Music drives away the Devil and makes people gay; they forget thereby all wrath, unchastity, arrogance, and the like. Next, after theology, I give music the highest place and the greatest honor." (Roland Bainton. *Here I Stand*. pp. 266-267)

<http://www.cph.org/p-18223-lutheran-choral-anthology-the-16th-century.aspx>