

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 33. August 11, 2019. Proper 14

Notes on the Liturgy #2

A few introductory thoughts;

When Anglicans are asked what they believe, instead of citing founding theologians or specific doctrine, they often either refer the questioner to the Book of Common Prayer, or invite them to join us in worship; they point to the liturgy, in other words. Sometimes they quote a Latin saying: *Lex orandi lex credenda statuat*: “the law of prayer establishes the law of belief,” (and vice versa). How we pray (our liturgy) and what we believe (our doctrine) are mirror images of each other.

But note: our liturgy is not simply the written script we follow in our Prayer Book or the words projected on our screen: it is the event itself, something that happens, something we do. And it is the event itself that expresses what we believe, which is to say that the meaning of the liturgy – what we believe – is conveyed not only in words, but in the setting, the sacred vessels and vestments, the music, the gestures, movements, sounds and smells that accompany them. The whole person, in other words, the body, the senses, the imagination as well as the mind is called to respond, and so our beliefs become not a set of doctrines filed away in our brain, but a part of who we are as persons.

As we celebrate the liturgy week by week, it gradually shapes us as a community and as individuals, because at the liturgy, we rehearse, through our rituals, the kinds of behaviors and attitudes we aspire to make our own. When we stand to praise, sit to listen, kneel to pray, acknowledge our sinfulness, pray for those in need, pass the peace and so forth, we are practicing for our lives as Christians in the “world out there.” By this constant rehearsing, the church can very gradually grow towards being the community it is meant to be.