

About The Mass

Our Greatest Prayer

The greatest and most important prayer of the Catholic Church is the Mass. At Mass we gather to celebrate the saving actions of Jesus. Jesus is present with us at Mass in the priest who leads our worship, in the word of God that is read, in the bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and in the community that gathers in His name.

The Introductory Rites

These rites are to draw together those who have come and establish a community of faith preparing us to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.

The Entrance Procession

The priest and the other ministers enter the church. As the procession begins we sing a gathering song.

The Greeting

The procession pauses before the altar to show reverence, and the priest, deacon, lector and servers move to their places. The priest and deacon kiss the altar to show reverence for the table on which the bread and wine will be offered.

As we begin our worship, the priest welcomes us by saying, "The Lord be with you." We answer, "And also with you."

The Penitential Rite

As a community, we confess that we have sinned, and we thank God for the gift of forgiveness. We need to lay aside the parts of ourselves that hold us back from God before we can approach His table.

The Gloria

We say or sing the Gloria, a very ancient hymn in which the Church which acknowledges the glory of God. We do not say the Gloria in Advent or Lent, or at solemnities or feasts.

The Opening Prayer or Collect

The priest now invites the people to pray. After a brief silence, he says a prayer that gives us the focus or theme for that Mass. This prayer addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The people voice their assent by saying "Amen".

The Liturgy of the Word

The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of readings from Sacred Scripture together with the Psalm that occurs between them. The homily, Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful develop and conclude this part of the Mass. In the readings, the table of God's word is prepared for the faithful and the riches of the Bible are opened to us.

The First Reading is usually from the Old Testament. We are reminded that story of God's love for us began long long ago.

The Responsorial Psalm—The Psalms, some written by King David himself are songs of praise to the Lord. These prayers are directed towards meditation on the word of God.

The Second Reading comes from the New Testament writings other than the four Gospels.

The Gospel Acclamation is a rite or act in itself, by which the people welcome and assent to the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel.

The Gospel is the written record of the words and deeds of Jesus. The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the Word and great reverence for it is shown by the actions of the proclaiming minister as well as the congregation. The minister prepares by a blessing or a prayer and the people stand for the proclamation.

The Homily is an explanation of the meaning of the readings of the day. The homily can be given by a priest or deacon but not a lay person.

The Profession of Faith or Creed is the assent of the community to the Word of God as proclaimed in the readings and a statement of what we believe as Catholics. The Nicene Creed which we use at mass has been normative since the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

The Prayer of the Faithful or General Intercessions

These petitions come from the people and are **our** requests before the Lord. We pray for the needs of the Church, public authorities, for those burdened by any kind of difficulty and for the local community.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

At the last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet by which His sacrifice on the cross is continually made present. Christ took bread and wine and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples saying "Do this in memory of me".

The Liturgy of the Eucharist corresponds precisely to these words and actions of Jesus. At the Preparation of the Gifts, the bread and wine are brought forward. In the Eucharistic Prayer, thanks are given to God for the work of salvation and the offered bread and wine become the Body of Christ. The host is broken and in Communion we receive the Lord's Body as did the Disciples in the last supper.

Preparation of the Gifts—The altar table is prepared by placing the corporal, purificator, Missal and chalice. The offerings of bread and wine are brought forward by the people. The priest washes his hands at the side of the altar as an expression of his desire to stand pure before the Lord.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the center and summit of the entire celebration. The priest says this prayer, but it is really our prayer. The elements of the Eucharistic Prayer are:

Thanksgiving: We express our gratitude for God's salvation and His offer of that salvation to us all.

Acclimation: We join with the angels and say "Holy, Holy, Holy" praising God.

Epiclesis: Prayers that ask the Holy Spirit that our human gifts become Christ's Body and Blood.

Institution Narrative and Consecration: The story of Jesus' institution of the Eucharistic celebration at the last supper.

Anamnesis: As Christ asked, we keep the memory of His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.

Offering: We offer the sacrifice of Christ **and our sacrifices** as our part of the dynamic of salvation.

Intercessions: We ask that our offering (as above) include all members of the church living and dead, not just those of us here today.

Final Doxology: A final expression of our glorification of God to which we say Amen or *I believe*.

The Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer—We pray the prayer that Jesus gave us which reminds us that we must go to God daily to be able to live His way.

The Rite of Peace - We ask for peace and unity for ourselves and the whole human community.

The Breaking of the bread or Fraction - The Bread is broken so that we may share it. We sing or say the *Agnus Dei* or Lamb of God asking that the sins of the world may be taken away.

Communion—Humans eat food every day so that we can live in this world. We come forward at Communion to consume the Body of Christ so that we can live in His world. What we eat in this earthly life plays no small part in its character. Eating the Body of Christ enables us to live the Life of Christ and makes us one with Him. It's real.

Concluding Rite

Blessing and Dismissal The priest blesses us and sends us forth with the directive to love and serve one another.

Eucharist comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means thanksgiving. This term has been used since the time of the Church Fathers to refer to the celebration as commanded by Jesus of the Lord's Supper.

Liturgy (*leitourgia*) is a Greek composite word meaning originally a public duty, a service to the state undertaken by a citizen. It was used in the Greek translation of the old testament to refer to the public services in the Hebrew Temple whereby it gained its religious connotation.

Mass—comes from the dismissal of the people, "Ite missa est" at the end of the service. In time this one small detail gave its name to the entire service.