

# What on earth are Catholics doing during Mass?!



*“The Mass offers us all a unique opportunity to see things as God sees them. We are invited into the throne room of heaven for an hour each Sunday to worship alongside the angels”*

*– Mark Hart*

The word ‘Mass’ comes from the Latin ‘missa’ which means ‘to be sent forth’. On a Sunday, we are reminded of this and sent out on a Mission.

In the Mass, the Church celebrates Christ’s Passover from death to life. We recall the events of the Last Supper. Christ is present in the people, minister, Word and Communion. The structure of the Mass is based on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35); scripture, breaking of the bread, sharing and sending out.

There are four main sections:

The Introductory Rites

The Liturgy of the Word

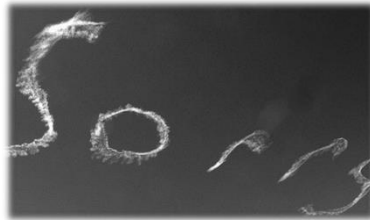
The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Communion Rite

At certain times within the Mass, we stand to demonstrate respect, or honour, or our willingness to act. We kneel to show humility and adoration.

# The Introductory Rites

The Preparatory Rites help the faithful, come together as one, establish communion and prepare themselves properly to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily. Silence before Mass allows us to draw our attention to God, and to reflect on what we want to bring to God and who we want to pray for during the Mass.



## **GATHERING SONG**

We belong to God. Because we belong to God in Christ, then we belong to each other.

## **SIGN OF THE CROSS**

We mark ourselves with the greatest sign and act of love that the world has ever witnessed. We remind ourselves that all we do should be according to God's will.

## **GREETING**

We are reminded that God is with us and ask for him to strengthen us in our mission. We pray for the Priest when we respond, "And with your Spirit"  
(Gal 6:18, Phil 4:23, Philemon 25)

## **PENITENTIAL ACT**

Here we reflect on what we have thought, said and done recently or not done. There will have been times when these things won't have been what God would want from us, so we take time here before to say sorry and put ourselves right with God and anyone else, so that we can enter fully in to the rest of the Mass.

## **KYRIE**

We ask for God's mercy on us for the things we have done wrong, which he promises to those who ask.

## **GLORIA**

An ancient hymn of praise to God, as the Angels sang to the shepherds when they announced that Jesus had been born.

## **COLLECT**

A short prayer is prayed, which we make our own by responding: **Amen**, which means, "yes, Lord, we agree with what has been said and are counting on your support and help".

*"Mass isn't just about us  
spending time with God  
but God's desire to  
spend time with us"*  
– Mark Hart

# The Liturgy of the Word

The focus of the people is drawn to the lectern, which holds the Bible. We hear the word of the Lord being proclaimed, reminding us that God speaks to us. He is a relational God who wants to hear from us and communicate with us. One of the ways he does this is through Scripture. Scripture is the foundation of the Mass.



## **FIRST READING**

This is usually taken from the Old Testament, the history of the people of Israel, the Law, the prophets and the books of wisdom. During the Easter season the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the beginnings of Christianity.

## **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

The Psalms are sung or read, with a response repeated at the end of each verse for the congregation to join in.

## **SECOND READING**

This is from the letters of the Apostles in the New Testament: Paul, Peter, James and John. It often provides a practical example of what is required when the other readings are lived out.

## **GOSPEL**

The Gospel reading proclaims the life of Jesus recorded in four distinct ways by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Gospel is read with the greatest reverence, as it recounts for us the life and teachings of Jesus. It is the Priest or Deacon who reads it and we stand to listen to it as the gospels are the “heart of all the Scriptures” which hold “a unique place in the Church” – Catechism of the Catholic Church 125/7.

## **HOMILY**

Here the priest unpacks the readings and highlights how they are linked and fit into the Mass of the day. He encourages us to be changed by what we have heard today in the readings.

After the homily there is a time of Silence, for us to think about what we have heard and its significance in our lives.

## **PROFESSION OF FAITH**

This expresses what we believe, as a universal Church.

## **BIDDING PRAYERS**

Bidding prayers are asking for direction, clarity and asking others to pray so allow time for this. Petitions will be offered for the holy Church, for civil authorities, for those weighed down by various needs, for all men and women, and for the salvation of the whole world. We join in with the responses as we pray the prayers ourselves.

*“The Mass is about God’s people.  
We are not at Mass for ourselves  
but for each other”*

*– Mark Hart*

# The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The focus now moves to the altar. For Catholics, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. It is the vital centre of all the Church is and does, because at its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, continuing and making available his saving work among us.



## **PROCESSION WITH GIFTS**

It is one of the Church's most ancient customs that the people themselves provided the materials for the Eucharist. The rite of carrying up the gifts continues the spiritual value and meaning of this ancient custom and is a powerful expression of the whole congregation's participation in the Eucharist. We bring what we are, our joys and our sufferings.

## **THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

The Eucharistic Prayer is the high point of the Eucharistic Celebration. We recall what Jesus did at the Last Supper. We are reminded that Jesus sacrificed his body and blood for us all, in dying on the cross. Here the power of the Holy Spirit transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The word 'Eucharist' comes from the Greek 'eucharistos', which means 'grateful' and is now usually translated as 'thanksgiving'. We thank God for the amazing sacrifice he made in sending his son Jesus to take punishment for our sins and die on the cross so that all those who believe can have eternal life.

### **HOLY HOLY**

This song is composed of the cry of the angels in Isaiah 6:3 and a greeting in Psalm 118:26 that is applied to the presence of Christ. God calls us to be "holy" like him.

**MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION** is recited, reminding us that Jesus was sent to earth to save us.

### **THE GREAT AMEN**

This chant at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, reminds us that it is thanks to Jesus that we are saved and able to have a relationship with God.

### **COMMUNION**

We come forward to receive Our Lord in communion. Those who are not Roman Catholics are invited to express our spiritual communion by joining the procession to receive a blessing from the priest or Eucharistic minister, crossing their arms across their chest to indicate this. Unfortunately, those who are not Roman Catholics may not receive communion, because by responding AMEN to 'The Body of Christ' and 'The Blood of Christ', they are saying they believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts have been transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ (transubstantiation) and that they were at one with the Catholic community.



# Communion Rite

The eating and drinking together of the Lord's Body and Blood in a Paschal meal is the culmination of the Eucharist. The themes underlying these rites are the mutual love and reconciliation that are both the condition and the fruit of worthy communion and the unity of the many in one.



## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Together we stand and pray the prayer that Jesus taught.

## **THE SIGN OF PEACE**

We offer one other a handshake as a sign of peace and that we recognise Christ in others. As we do so, we pray that they will know God's peace in their hearts.

## **LAMB OF GOD**

This is one of the earliest names given to Jesus, implying that he went like a lamb of sacrifice to be betrayed and condemned. He took upon himself with great gentleness, the sins of the world.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

We acknowledge we need God's help and echo the words of the Centurion in Matthew 8:8, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed".

# The Concluding Rites

The people are sent forth to put into effect in their daily lives the Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and the unity in Christ which they have celebrated. Their mission is to witness to Christ in the world and to bring the Gospel to others. We pray that the same Holy Spirit that makes the Body of Christ comes on the people to live as the Body of Christ as they leave. "Once we are transformed, we are supposed to transform the world" –

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## **BLESSING**

God wishes us well, and blesses us so that we equipped to live out what we have learnt during Mass.

## **DISMISSAL**

We are sent out to spread the joy and peace of the Lord that we have experiences during the Mass. His Holy Spirit gives us the gifts to be able to do this and change the world. The Priest says, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life" and we respond joyfully, "Thanks be to God!" Then we go out in to the world to spread the good news.



This booklet aims to explain the Catholic Mass.  
It is colour coded in relation to the 'Order of the  
Mass booklet' used during Mass at school.

Content inspired by 'Behold the Mystery' by Mark Hart  
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