

## Catholic Mass Etiquette

Growing up in Aiken, I remember etiquette being taught in ordinary settings, including cotillion, where young people learned basic courtesies and formal dances. The purpose was not to make life stiff, but to help everyone act with respect, order, and ease.

Sports have a similar etiquette. In soccer, even something as simple as handing the ball back after it goes out of bounds keeps the game moving and shows respect for the other players.

If ordinary settings benefit from etiquette, Catholic Mass calls for something much deeper: reverence before the living God and love for the Eucharist. The Mass is not a social gathering, a performance, or a public event like any other. It is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where we come before the Lord and receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Summer is a fitting time to review this, especially as many visitors join us from other cities and states. Our reverence helps parishioners and guests alike enter more deeply into the sacredness of the Mass.

- **Dressing for Catholic Mass.** “Sunday best” never goes out of fashion. We do not dress with care to draw attention to ourselves, but to honor the Lord before whom we come. Dressing well and modestly is one simple way to show reverence for God and charity toward those praying around us.
- **Before Catholic Mass.** Arriving early, whenever possible, gives us time to quiet our minds and prepare our hearts for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It also gives us time to speak with the living God in prayer before Mass begins.
- **Sign of Peace.** Because the Sign of Peace immediately precedes Holy Communion, it should remain simple, reverent, and brief. A slight bow with hands folded is a beautiful and appropriate way to offer peace.
- **Applause.** Applause has its proper place in auditoriums and stadiums. At Mass, our deepest gratitude is expressed first by lifting our hearts and minds to God, from Whom all good gifts come.
- **After Catholic Mass.** Just as arriving early helps us prepare for Mass, remaining for a few moments afterward allows us to thank the Lord for having received Him in the Eucharist. It also allows the church to empty more peacefully, while giving those who wish to remain in prayer the quiet they need.

Father Frei