

Catechist Corner

*Saint Joseph and Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Parish Communities
Cecilia, Louisiana*

*Jesus, the Mass, and You
A Walk Through the Parts of Holy Mass
(Introduction to a series)
October 27, 2024*

Holy Mass Reveals Our Redemption and Our Vocation

1.) Holy Mass is much more than a religious ceremony that we are required to attend. The Church requires us to obey the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. The rule points to a deeper reality that goes beyond legalism. The Church's mandate to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation directs us to the mandate of the Eternal Father.

How does Mass reveal our redemption and vocation?

2.) Original sin separated and estranged us from God. Our communion with Him was broken, and our connection with divine life was severed. Sin also separates people from each other and creates division. In Sacred Scripture, we see the Father's plan for us. He promised, after the fall, to restore us to our former dignity as sons and daughters of the Father, with the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Scattered and divided humanity would be reunited to the Father in Christ and each other. The Son of God becoming flesh, gives us a clue to this.

3.) Coming to Mass is more than coming to a building for worship. By design, the structure, furnishings, and décor have a catechetical design. In other words, the physical things around us point us to divine realities. Sometimes it takes noticing your surroundings to help adjust the mindset.

Stained Glass and Ceramic

4.) In any Catholic church, one of the first things to notice is the artwork. Artistic stained-glass windows grace the main aisle and illuminate the interior with various colors of sunlight. Various angels and saints line the walls and the sanctuary, with hands folded in prayer and eyes towards Heaven. These two features are the tip of the iceberg, but they serve as a good reference point.

So, what's the divine reality? What does this have to do with redemption and vocation?

5.) Coming in from the outside into the Church speaks of the reality of death. We are not destined to remain in this world. The colorful lights from the windows tell us of glorification in Heaven and the beauty of redemption. The saints' glow with the radiance of the love and presence of God, with sanctity and goodness. So, think of that when you're sitting in your pew. Our Heavenly Father has destined us to join Him for all eternity in the company of all the angels and saints. Like the window, the Holy Spirit wants you to glow with the light of revelation and the warmth of His love.

6.) Entering through the doors, we leave this worldly life behind us to enter the Lord God's presence. True, God is everywhere. He is everywhere leading us here. Notice the Holy Water at the entrance. Baptism joins us to Christ's body, the Church. So, it is no accident that we mark ourselves with Holy Water upon entering. Crossing ourselves with water is a proclamation and a divine promise. Making the sign of the cross reminds us of the instrument of our redemption and salvation. Baptism grants the right and duty to gather as one People of God in God's house to give Him glory, praise, and love.

7.) The sanctuary, like the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple, sits at the head of the church. When I was younger, I pictured Mass as an audience with God with the altar as His throne. Through Baptism, our lives should lead us to the Seat of God. The sanctuary represents the inner life of the Holy Trinity, where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present. From the sanctuary of Heaven, we receive divine food for our souls. We receive the blessings of the Father. Like the disciples on the Mount, we come to sit at Our Lord's feet and have Him speak to us.

8.) What about the confessional off to the side? The reality is that along the road back to God, we will need His healing, strength, and forgiveness. Like a spiritual pit stop, we can fill up with God's grace on our journey home to the Father.

Sometimes we need to focus our minds on what our eyes cannot see, but faith can. Don't forget the rest of us sinners sitting around you. The Father calls us together to pray and support each other on our common pilgrimage home.

In the next reflection, we begin the Introductory or Opening Rites of Mass.

Timothy Andries

Catechist

Sts. Joseph and Rose of Lima Parishes