

Part One

Introductory Rites

Mass Begins



The Introductory Rites



Before Mass begins

Prepare yourself prayerfully for Mass by placing yourself in the presence of Our Lord. The altar serves as the centerpiece of the Mass, representing communion and fellowship with Him, as well as a place of sacrifice. During this time, we engage in a heartfelt conversation with Our Divine Lord. Reflect on what you bring to Him: What are you anxious about? What pains or wounds need healing? What gratitude would you like to express? Remember, the Divine Physician invites you to share your aches, pains, and grievances. Likewise, Our Divine Teacher wishes to instruct and guide you. Most importantly, He desires you to know and love Him as deeply as He knows and loves you.

1. The Procession to the Altar and Greeting.

1.) The Holy Mass begins with an opening hymn and a procession to the altar at the center of the sanctuary. This procession usually includes a cross-bearer, an altar server, a deacon, and a priest. Singing hymns as an act of worship has deep roots in Jewish tradition and was practiced by Jesus and the Apostles, continuing to this day.

Why do we stand?

2.) Standing is a sign of respect as we greet the priest who offers this Mass for us. More profoundly, we are gathered to offer the perfect sacrifice, receive the Word of God, and be sent out as disciples. We stand to demonstrate our readiness to give the Father our perfect worship and sacrifice. We stand prepared to receive Christ, His words, His grace, and His mission.

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The Cross and the Priest

3.) The Cross leads the procession. The Christian life begins with, is directed toward, and springs from the Cross of Christ. The cross is carried from the holy water fonts to the altar. Why is this significant? It reminds us that we are baptized into Christ's death to sin. The cross ultimately leads to the altar of sacrifice, where the Lamb of God is offered for our salvation and redemption.

4.) The Priest symbolizes Christ, who was sent by the Father to offer Himself on the Altar of Redemption for the sake of humanity. Along with the rest of the procession, the priest also represents the People of God. As we journey from baptism to eternal life, the People of God are accompanied by Christ, our true Eternal High Priest. The priest stands before the congregation to present the prayers and intentions of the Church to God. This highlights the profound reality that Jesus Christ stands before the Father, offering Himself along with our prayers and intentions.

Reverencing the Altar

5.) The Priest, with others in the procession and the congregation, bow before the Tabernacle. He then reverences the altar with a bow and/or a kiss. The altar symbolizes the loving heart of Christ. Out of love for us, He will lay Himself down on the altar, just as He did on the cross. Out of love for us, He will offer His flesh and blood to the Father for our salvation. At every Mass, He offers Himself out of love for us. The altar serves as the table in heaven that is being prepared for you and me.

6.) Bowing and kissing the altar is a sign of gratitude, love, and reverence for Our Lord during the sacrificial meal of fellowship. This act expresses thanks and love in response to the precious gift of His life that He freely offers us.

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Greeting

“In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”

7.) Holy Mass begins with making the Sign of the Cross, which symbolizes our redemption and salvation through Christ's Cross. The Cross serves as the key that Our Lord used to open the gates of heaven. Our Heavenly Father sent His Son to die on the Cross so that we may receive His life and live in the Holy Spirit.

8.) Making the Sign of the Cross is more than just a liturgical gesture; it is invoking the name of God. Holy Mass begins with calling out to God to make His presence known, allowing us to present our petitions and prayers. Invoking the name of God invites us to be in His divine presence.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”¹

9.) Next, the priest gives a greeting and a prayer. Remember that priests don't simply "preside" over a ceremony. A priest offers sacrifice and prayers on behalf of the faithful. So, the greeting is the priest's prayer for the faithful that God makes his presence and grace known. It is a prayer for communion with God. Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, speaks and prays through His priestly representative at Mass. This is why we respond, ***“and with your spirit.”²*** This is an English translation from the Latin *et cum spiritu tuo*. This response reflects its biblical origins.

10.) In the response ***“with your spirit,”*** we recognize the Spirit of the Lord that the priest receives at ordination. Our response is to return the greeting to the priest and the Lord who speaks through him. We respond that the Lord accompanies his priest in his sacred actions and works through him.

¹ Roman Missal #1-2, Order of the Mass, Introductory Rite

² 2Timothy 4:22

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Why the change in wording? Before 1970, Mass was said in Latin. The priest would have said, "*Dominum vobiscum*" (*Lord be with you*), to which the people would respond "*et cum spiritu tuo*" (*and with your spirit*). When the Mass was translated into English, the response since 1970 was "and also with you." In 2001, the English was revised to reflect a more precise translation from Latin to reflect the ancient liturgical heritage. So now we have *et cum spiritu tuo* = *and with your spirit*.

2. Penitential Act and Absolution

"I confess to Almighty God."

11.) In the book of Ezekiel, the Prophet says, ***"I desire not the death of the sinner, but that he rend his heart and return to me and live."***³ Consider Our Divine Lord and Savior's words, ***"I came into the world to save sinners, not condemn them."***⁴ Lastly, ***"Repent and hear the Good News."***⁵

12.) In Jesus' name, the priest invites the People of God to purify and prepare their hearts and minds before celebrating the sacred mystery of redemption and communion. Jesus, the Lord tells us to repent and to rend our hearts to Him. Rending the heart means to tear or open up. Confessing our sins is not an old-school obsession with guilt. Confession is an honest, humble recognition of the need for purity. Recognizing and acknowledging our sinfulness expresses faithful hope in the Lord's mercy and forgiveness. Seeking purity is an expressed desire for holiness and communion with God. ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."***⁶

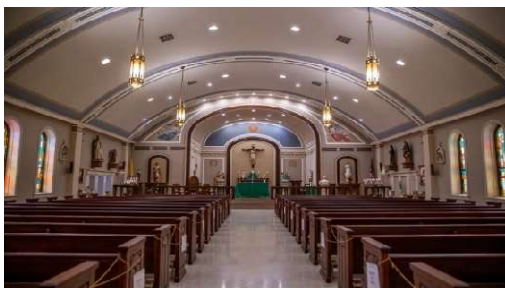
³ Ezekiel 33:11

⁴ Luke 19:10, Matthew 9:12-13

⁵ Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:17

⁶ Matthew 5:18

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13.) Standing in the sight and presence of God, we pray to Him, with and for others. Opening our hearts to the Divine Physician, we offer our woundedness, failings, and need for reconciliation in the following words. ***(Confiteor or Confession Prayer)***.

"I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, We strike our breast during the next two lines: through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore, I ask blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God."⁷

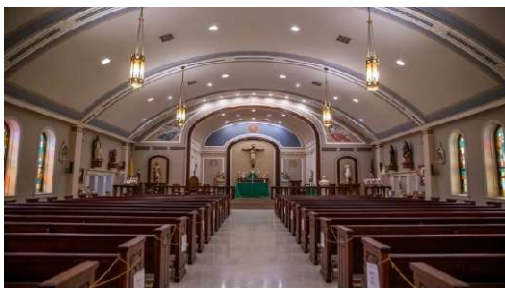
14.) Confessing one's sins has been a part of the liturgy since apostolic times. This liturgical practice is described in the *Teaching of the Apostles*, written in the first century.

15.) We were made for communion with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This communion of holiness also extends to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Holiness of life extends beyond actions and words and includes our thoughts. The "Confession Prayer" invites us to imitate Christ in a complete offering of ourselves before God. Rend your heart, open your heart, mind, and soul to the Divine Physician and Redeemer, and let Him heal you and make you holy. In this prayer, we make a deep and sincere examination of conscience.

16.) ***Why do we strike our breast and repeat "through my fault" 3 times?*** Striking the breast is a biblical gesture of sorrow and humility. Sin grieves and saddens God's heart because sin separates us from Him. As a penitential gesture, we recall that sin wounds our relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As an act of penance, we humbly and faithfully ask for pardon and reconciliation from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

⁷ Roman Missal #4, Order of the Mass, Penitential Act

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Absolution

“May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us of our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.”

17) After the *Confiteor* or Confession Prayer, the priest gives absolution granted through the merits of Christ. With faith in Our Lord, we reply “Amen.” Following the absolution by the Priest, the Priest and the faithful ask the Lord Jesus for his mercy and help. The Penitential Act in Mass prepares us to participate in the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The Penitential Prayer or Confiteor concludes with the “*Kyrie*,” or Lord have mercy. Kyrie naturally follows the Confiteor as an act of repentance.

Lord, have mercy. (Kyrie, eleison)

Christ, have mercy. (Christe, eleison)

Lord, have mercy. (Kyrie, eleison)

18.) Asking the Lord for his mercy is neither an obsession with guilt nor a lack of faith. The plea for mercy is our trust and faith in God, who is mercy itself. To plead for mercy is an act of humility that tempers pride. To ask God for mercy is an act of love and a desire for communion with him. To our plea of mercy, Our Merciful Lord will graciously grant our plea.

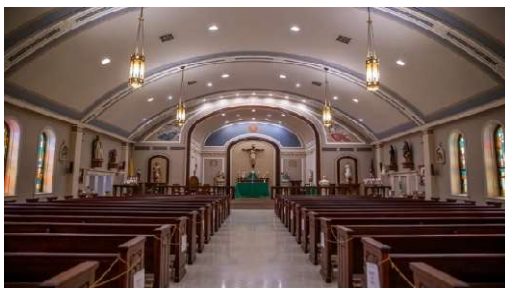
3. The Gloria and the Opening Prayer

“Glory to God in the highest...”⁸

19.) The Introductory Rite of the Mass draws a close. Upon entering the church, we professed our Baptism by making the Sign of the Cross with Holy Water. In prayer, we acknowledged our sinfulness and implored the Lord's mercy.

⁸ Roman Missal #8, Order of the Mass, Introductory Rite

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20.) The People of God, called together through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, sing a hymn of praise to God. This hymn expresses our joy, hope, gratitude, and faith. The ***“Gloria”*** summarizes our redemption and salvation received through Christ, Our Lord. We praise Him who revealed the Glory of the Father. We praise God, who became flesh and offered Himself up as the Lamb of God. We praise Him, who sits at the right hand of the Father and receives our prayers and petitions.

“Let Us Pray”

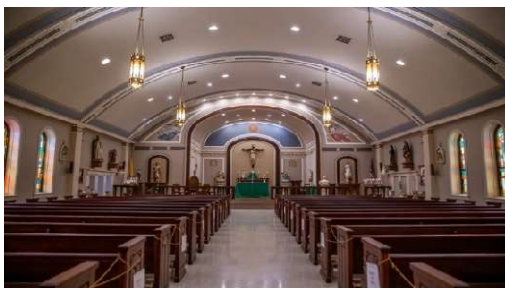
21.) After singing praise to God, we pray the ***opening prayer***⁹. But why is it called the “collect”? Essentially, it means collecting or gathering your thoughts and directing them to God. What do we gather or collect? The opening prayer has 4 parts that point to the theme of the Mass to be celebrated. For example, during Advent, the opening prayers center around the birth of Christ and His coming into the world. “Collect” is also the action of the priest who collects the intentions and prayers of the faithful to be offered to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Our Opening Prayer prepares to hear the Word of God in the readings.

What are the 4 parts?

- First is the invocation or calling upon the Lord God
- Secondly, we express our reasons for confidence and trust that the Lord will receive and answer our prayers
- Thirdly, a prayer of petition. What do we wish Christ to accomplish in us when celebrating Mass?
- Lastly, a short conclusion followed by an affirmative AMEN.

⁹ GIRM #54, General Instruction on the Roman Missal

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22.) The Introductory Rites prepare our hearts, minds, and souls to receive the Word of God. The Word inflames the heart to receive and offer Christ Jesus in the Eucharist. After receiving Our Divine Lord, we are better prepared to go out and live as disciples and witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Reflection and Conclusion

Holy Mass begins with humble charity and faith as we gather together in the name of God. Calling out to God, we ask Him to intercede for us as individuals and as a community. This sets in motion our preparation to share in the sacred meal and offer ourselves to the Father through Christ. We have come before Our Lord to be healed, strengthened, and made holy. As Christ's disciples, we come before Christ to be sent out as His witnesses.

What did we bring to Our Divine Lord? Are there weaknesses and failings that need to be reconciled? Before approaching our sacrificial meal, we must be made clean. We approach Him with humility and contriteness of heart.

For Reflection: How often have we considered all that God has done? Are we in the habit of recognizing and counting our blessings? Do we recognize how merciful and forgiving God is? It's easy to say, "Jesus Saves," but how often do we look in the mirror and say, "Jesus is saving, loving, and forgiving me?" The more we contemplate God's greatness, the more "*Glory to God in the Highest*" becomes less a hymn and more an expression of our heart and soul.

Part Two

Liturgy of the Word



The Liturgy of the Word



1. The Liturgy of the Word

23.) With the closing of the introductory prayers, we move to the readings or the Liturgy of the Word. Opening the Scriptures allows us to encounter the living Christ, the Eternal Word of God. Reading from the Bible and the homily, the Prayers of the faithful, and the profession of faith make up the structure of the Liturgy of the Word. "Liturgy" comes from the Greek word for public service or duty. As Christians, it is a Baptismal right and duty to gather together for prayer, listen to the Sacred Scriptures, and break bread. (See Acts 2:2-4).

24.) The most obvious part of the Liturgy of the Word is reading or hearing the Scriptures. The Liturgical Year follows a three-year cycle that covers most of the Bible. We use both the Old and New Testaments because they are equally valid and make up the one "Word of God." For us Christians, pride of place is given to the Gospels as they reveal the person and mission of Our Divine Redeemer.

Why do we sit during the readings?

25.) When the Divine Teacher, Our Lord Jesus, gave his Sermon on the Mount, he gathered the people and had them sit around him. *"When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them...."*

¹⁰ It's common practice to be seated when a person addresses a crowd. Sitting tells the person speaking that they have your complete attention and you want to hear them. We sit to listen and to be instructed by the Divine Teacher who speaks through the sacred pages of Scripture. This posture indicates an interest in the message as well as the messenger.

The question for us becomes simple. Are we attentive during the readings? Are we opening the ears of the heart, mind, and soul to hear Our Divine Lord speak? Do we take advantage of the moments of silence to prepare to hear Jesus speak? It sounds overly simple, but the simplest preparation can make the difference between boredom and inspiration.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:1-2

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"The Word of the Lord, Thanks Be to God."

26.) The **First Reading and the Gospel** have a common theme. As the great St Augustine says, "The Old Testament prepares for the New, and the New Testament is hidden in the Old." The Old and New Testaments are one message, one revelation, and one Word of God. The **Second Reading** is mainly St Paul's letters and the remaining letters that make up the New Testament.

27.) Between the First and Second Reading is the Psalms. Christians and Jews from ancient times would pray or sing the Psalms as part of their private devotion and liturgical worship. The **Responsorial Psalm** serves as a moment of pause, for meditation on the Word of God. Unlike the two readings, the Psalms are hymns of praise to God.

The Response – Thanks Be to God

28.) Our response should be more than just a habit that we learned. On the other hand, it is not necessary to be heard by the people across the street. The wonders and mysteries of God were just announced. In the Scripture Readings, it is God Himself who has spoken to you. He has announced your redemption, salvation, peace, healing, and strength. Thanks be to God should come from the depths of a grateful heart and soul to Our Merciful God. A good habit to start is bowing your head at the response as an act of humility. His written word, Sacred Scripture, is a great gift; thank Him for it.

"Scripture - The Word of God"

29.) The Catechism, quoting Scripture, reminds us that *"To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end, we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith."* ¹¹

30.) When Our Lord came into this world, he took on our flesh and humanity to be seen, heard, and dwell among us. In the same way, the Scriptures take on the human form of a book. Jesus walked the earth as a man, but he was also God. Although the Scriptures were

¹¹ CCC #162, Mk 9:24, Lk 17:5, 22-32

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written in human words, they are God's inspired words. Listening to the readings at Mass, if done with the proper mindset, is listening to Our Lord. Consider the following quote from the Second Vatican Council: *"In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talk with them."*¹²

"To nourish and strengthen the faith."

31.) At Baptism, we received the seeds of faith and life in Christ. As we get older, we see and experience the world differently. These experiences can raise doubts and rob us of the strength to persevere. The crosses we bear and the life of discipleship are not easy. In His eternal wisdom, the Lord God has always known our needs. He anticipated the wounds suffered and the healing needed. Before ascending to the Father, Christ Our Lord promised to be with us always.

32.) God the Holy Spirit teaches, corrects, and heals through the inspired words of the Scriptures. From the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, Our Divine Teacher reveals the Father's plan of redemption for humanity. He offers encouragement and strength from the witness to the Father's plan as it unfolded in history.

33.) The Introductory Rite is our response to the Father, who calls out to his children who have wandered off. The Liturgy of the Word is listening and speaking with our Lord as he guides us on our journey home. Our Lord preached repentance, conversion, and holiness in preparation for the Last Supper and His Passion. Similarly, in the Liturgy of the Word, Our Lord prepares his disciples for the Eucharist. Our Divine Redeemer speaks with us to strengthen, encourage, and sustain us as His witnesses in the world.

"Sacred Scriptures "grow with the one who reads them." ¹³

34.) Constant and prayerful reading of the Scriptures can allow us to drink deeply from the Word of God. Good commentaries should be used to help immerse ourselves in the sacred word. One way to prepare for Mass is to read/study the readings during the week. The study and reading of Sacred Scriptures allow Our Lord and the disciples to accompany one another along the path we call life.

¹² Dei Verbum #21, On Divine Revelation, Second Vatican Council; CCC #104

¹³ Dei Verbum #8, On Divine Revelation, Second Vatican Council; CCC #94

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2. The Readings: Old and New Testament

(First and Second Reading with a Psalm)

"For in the readings, as explained in the homily, God speaks to his people, opening up for them the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment; Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word." ¹⁴

The First Reading

35.) ***Why start with the Old Testament? What is the Old Testament's value?*** The Old retains its value as Divine Revelation and the inspired Word of God.¹⁵ The Old Testament builds up to what Our Lord will accomplish in the Gospel. The OT, in general, reveals the origin of the Father's covenant and plan of redemption. In Mass, the First Reading is directly related to or connected to the Gospel for that day. The two readings, First Reading and Gospel, form, as it were, one divine message. Both readings give insight and interpret each other.

36.) The OT serves as a witness to the faithfulness and goodness of the Father, who does not abandon his people. The Patriarchs and holy women serve as examples of steadfast faith in God's covenant promises. The Chosen People often failed but returned to God to be renewed with the promise of a Messiah. These stories and covenants serve to strengthen our faith, give encouragement, and heighten the expectation and desire for the Messiah and Christ.

The Responsorial Psalm

37.) Psalms are prayers that were sung as hymns. The singing of Psalms by the Chosen People dates back well before Jesus' time. Jesus, Our Lord, as a child and an adult, prayed the Psalms. Christians followed Our Lord's example and retained them in Scripture and worship. The Psalms are songs of praise for God's greatness, faithfulness, and works. It naturally follows that after the First Reading has witnessed what God the Father has done and plans to do, we take a moment to praise and glorify him.

¹⁴ General Instruction of the Roman Missal #55, USCCB, 2005

¹⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #128-130, and #140

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38.) Singing the Psalms is a response to the First Reading. The Father reveals his loving plan of redemption and salvation little by little. He invites us into the covenant that will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Praying/singing the Psalms encourages us to meditate or think deeply about what Our Heavenly Father has revealed to us.

39.) Listen to the readings attentively. Frequent study and reading of Scripture make the heart and mind more accustomed to listening to the Word of God. One suggestion would be to read over the Sunday readings during the week and use a good commentary. Magnificat and Word Among Us are good tools to use.

40.) Above all else, the most important preparation is prayer. In Scripture, the Lord comes and speaks to you. Our Divine Teacher knows what you need before you ask him. Let his words of healing, wisdom, and strength penetrate deeply into places in most need of hearing his voice.

The Second Reading

"For in the readings, God speaks to his people, opening up the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment....." ¹⁶

41.) The First Reading and Gospel follow a three-year cycle (Cycles A, B, and C). We'll cover the cycles with the Gospels. The Second Reading is taken from St. Paul and the rest of the New Testament letters. Typically, each letter is read all the way through. If this Sunday's reading is from the letter to the Ephesians, the complete letter will be read before proceeding to the next.

42.) ***What is the 2nd reading for? How does it connect with the Gospel?*** St. Paul and the NT letters teach us how to live the Christian life and spring from the Gospel of Christ. The letters were written to different communities to exhort and encourage Christians living in various situations. If listened to attentively, the 2nd Readings should increase our hunger and thirst for Christ's words and deeds in the Gospel.

¹⁶ General Instruction of the Roman Missal #55, USCCB, 2005., A Biblical Walk Through the Mass, Dr Edward Sri

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43.) We need God's grace and strength. Our hearts, minds, and souls search for truth, meaning, and purpose. Only Jesus Christ and his Gospel can dispel the darkness, conquer sin and death, and lead us to happiness. The world in which we live has challenged and rejected Christian truth; how do we live as imitators of Christ?

Why do we sit during the 1st and 2nd readings?

44.) Sitting reflects attentive listening and a humble desire to be instructed in the ways of Christ and holiness. Thanks be to God should not be approached as a liturgical action. Giving thanks to God should come from the depths of your heart and soul. The response reflects the reception and gratitude for being blessed with the Word of God. Scripture readings are not reflections of the community or just religious reflection. Through the readings, God comes to his people to speak, love, encourage, and save them.

45.) Who among us does not struggle with sin or uncertainty? Who is not anxious and searching for truth and purpose? What words do the heart, mind, and soul crave? It's not enough to listen to the readings; we must also listen to him who is speaking through the written word. *"The Sacred Scriptures contain the Word of God and, because they are inspired, they are truly the Word of God."*¹⁷

First, why do we stand for the Hallelujah and the Gospel?

"It has long been customary to stand in attentive reverence to hear these words. "We firmly believe Christ is present in his word since it is he who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church." ¹⁸

46.) Standing reaffirms our belief and deep respect for our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is present and speaking to us. In secular history, standing shows respect for the dignity and rank of the person speaking. It also reinforces our trust in the Lord's promise to be with us

¹⁷ CCC #135; Dei Verbum, On Divine Revelation, Second Vatican Council, 1964

¹⁸ On the Sacred Liturgy #7, Second Vatican Council, 1963

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always¹⁹, because it is He who is addressing us. We stand to listen to the Lord attentively, seeking His strength, guidance, healing, and mercy.

Ok, so what is Alleluia?

47.) "Halleluia" or "Alleluia" means "**Praise the Lord.**"²⁰ The Alleluia is chanted before the Gospel, except during Lent. The faithful gather to chant or sing the Alleluia as a reverent and joyful greeting to the Lord Jesus, who speaks to us through the Gospel.²¹ Our lives are filled with anxieties and the need for God's grace. Jesus Christ is the hidden desire of our hearts, minds, and souls. Shouldn't our hearts be filled with excitement and gratitude knowing that the Lord we desire will now speak to us?

The Gospel of the Lord

"Holy Mother Church has firmlyheld, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels... faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven."²²

48.) Sacred Scripture, from beginning to end, is the inspired Word of God. The Holy Gospels hold a unique place as they bear witness to the life and teachings of Our Divine Lord. According to the Catechism, the Gospels represent the "heart of all Scripture."²³ Listening to the Gospels is one of two key moments in our encounter with Our Divine Lord; the other is the reception of the Eucharist. When we come to Mass, we bring our wounds and needs to the Divine Physician. In the Gospels, the same Lord comes to heal, instruct, and strengthen us.

¹⁹ Matthew 28:20

²⁰ CCC #289 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

²¹ GIRM #62, General Instruction on the Roman Missal

²² Dei Verbum #9, On Divine Revelation, Second Vatican Council, 1965

²³ CCC #125

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Why do we cross our heads, lips, and heart?

49.) After the priest announces, "***The Holy Gospel according to ...***," we make small crosses on our forehead, lips, and heart. This gesture signifies our request for God to enlighten and instruct our minds, that our lips might speak of Him and bear witness to His presence, and that the Lord would forever reside in our hearts, transforming them to be like His. As we make this sign of the cross, we express our gratitude and faith by proclaiming, "***Glory to You, O Lord.***"

50.) Every human heart and soul yearns to hear the Word of God. Our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, completes us and makes us whole. As the Divine Physician, He heals us, and as our Redeemer, He gives us life. Jesus, the Divine Teacher, instructs us in holiness, truth, and righteousness. At the conclusion of the Gospel, our hearts and souls cannot help but exclaim, "***Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.***"

3. The Homily

Homily comes from the Latin word "homilia," which means address, conversation, or discourse. In ancient Greece, the word referred to addressing a crowd.

Is it a homily or a sermon?

51.) Normally, we refer to the priest's comments after the readings as a sermon, so what's the difference? A sermon typically addresses a moral or doctrinal topic, whereas a homily is a commentary on Scripture. In Mass, the two words are synonymous. In other words, the sermon/homily is practically the same because the priest's address serves both purposes.

52.) Our Lord explained his parables to the Apostles so they could grasp their deeper meaning. Take, for example, Jesus' parables about the Sower and the Seeds or the Weeds and the Wheat. In the homily, the priest will bring out points of interest for the faithful to consider and apply to their lives. Homilies can include words of wisdom from saints, the readings at Mass, quotes from the Catechism, and personal experiences.

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How can I get more out of the readings and the homily?

53.) Homilies serve as a bridge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. On the road to Emmaus, Our Lord opened the Scriptures to the Apostles before breaking bread with them.²⁴ Holy Mass is one single act of worship with each part linked together.²⁵ The readings introduce us to Our Lord and the mystery of redemption. (Liturgy of the Word). Homilies seek to enflame the heart and soul to seek union with Our Lord, holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven. We are united to Christ and get a taste of Heaven in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

54.) If I could put it his way, the homily is halftime at a football game. Homilies are the coach's speech to get the players fired up to go back on the field and get the big win. In the first half, what have I learned about the Lord God? What has he revealed about my life that needs his grace and strength? Just like a football team, what adjustments do I need to make? How can I grow closer to the Lord and grow as a disciple?

55.) We are called to be the Lord's witnesses and disciples. Through Baptism, we are called to the Lord's table, the sacrificial meal of his body and blood. The homily invites us to reflect on what Our Lord is revealing to us and how to respond to it. The Liturgy of the Word continues with a profession of faith and the prayers of the faithful. Those reflections will conclude the Liturgy of the Word and prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

4. Profession of Faith

By his revelation, "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, to invite and receive them into his own company."²⁶

56.) Echoing the Sacred Scriptures, the Catechism reminds us that God has revealed himself to us. He has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer, who has come to invite us into fellowship with the Father through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

²⁴ Lk 24:13-35, RSV-CE

²⁵ CCC #1346, Catechism of the Catholic Church

²⁶ CCC #142, Catechism of the Catholic Church; DV #5, Dei Verbum, Second Vatican Council

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57.) ***The gift of faith, or believing, is first an invitation from God.*** The gift of faith, or believing, is first an invitation from God ²⁷ to be in communion with Him. The Introductory Rite of Mass, the gathering of the faithful, is our response to God, who speaks first. God the Father sent his Son to reveal the Father's redemptive plan and love for humanity. In the Gospel and Readings, the Son of God made Man speaks to the People of God, announcing the good news of redemption and calling us to holiness. God speaks and calls his people to believe in him. This call from God invites us to respond.

58.) ***Faith is a human act that responds to God.***²⁸ Faith is a supernatural gift infused into the soul at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation. To assist in moving our minds and will, we rely on the Holy Spirit. By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, He invites humanity to trust in Him.. God is inviting us to be taught and instructed by him. God wants to guide us, to make us holy so that we may come to know, love, and serve him. ***I/We believe*** is saying yes to God. "Yes, Lord, teach me Your ways and reveal Yourself to me!"

59.) Together, we proclaim, "We believe"..... After hearing the Word of God, which is the Lord speaking to us, we answer, "Yes, Lord, we believe." The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed dates back to the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in 325 and 381 A.D. The Creed or Credo is a dogmatic statement on the essentials of the Christian Faith.

60.) We affirm our faith in the revelation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit regarding themselves and their plan for redemption. Faith in God is not based on what we know, understand, or agree on. Believing is letting God instruct and increase our knowledge and understanding with his revelation. Learning and study are not opposed to faith, they help prepare for it.

61.) Our act of believing opens the heart, mind, and soul to receive him sacramentally in the Eucharist. Faith and belief open the doors to the heart for him who knocks and wishes to enter. To stand and proclaim the Credo of Faith is to welcome the invitation to enter into the life of God, a life made whole by Christ in the Eucharist.

²⁷ CCC #153, Catechism of the Catholic Church

²⁸ CCC #154-155, Catechism of the Catholic Church; St Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologia

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62.) Instead of memorizing the Profession of Faith, allow yourself to be guided by the Holy Spirit and aided by grace to open up to what is being revealed. Two books I would recommend for a deeper look into the Creed are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium to the Catechism*. The Compendium is a bit shorter and is in question-answer format. Using them together would also be of great value.

5. The Prayers of the Faithful and Concluding Prayer

‘First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity.’²⁹

63) The Prayers of the Faithful, sometimes referred to as ***Intercessory Prayers***, act as a bridge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The motions and prayers at Mass reveal certain realities and characteristics of being baptized into the Body of Christ.

64.) Our Divine Teacher and Redeemer sustained and strengthened the Apostles through his word. At the Last Supper, the Lord offered his body and blood for us to the Father. As disciples, baptized into Christ’s body, we are continuously nourished by his word in the readings and with his body and blood in the Eucharist.

65.) Jesus offered prayers for those who followed him, those who didn’t, and practically anyone. His life was an offering, an intercession to the Father for others; as his followers and children of God, we are expected to do the same.

66.) Our salvation and redemption were highlighted in the readings, prompting the faithful to express their profession of faith. As we gather in Christ's name and exercise our baptismal priesthood, we turn to the Lord God and intercede for the Church, the world, and our needs.

67.) General intentions usually follow the same pattern or structure. Prayers are offered for the Pope, the Church, world leaders, and/or the nation and local community.

²⁹ 1 Timothy 2:1-2

The Liturgy of the Word



Lastly, we add our personal needs to those intentions. We're invited to join our hearts and minds to Christ. Humility and a loving heart, in imitation of Christ, prepare us to participate in and receive the Eucharist.

68.) Our Loving Lord opened his heart and emptied himself for humanity. When the heart and soul are filled with Christ, we can see with his eyes and love with his heart. In the Prayers of the Faith, Christ prays with us, in us, for us, and through us. The heart and soul united to Christ cannot help but say, Lord, hear our prayer.

Conclusion and Reflection

69.) It is always the Lord who speaks first. It is our Divine Shepherd who searches for us to draw us to himself. In the Liturgy of the Word, Our Lord gathers his disciples to speak to them, instruct them, and strengthen them. Upon hearing his words, we respond to the Lord with expressions of faith and supplication. Christ the Lord speaks to awaken the heart and soul with his word, so that we may receive his life in the Eucharist.

Part Three

Liturgy of the Eucharist



The Liturgy of the Eucharist



1. What is the big picture?

70.) Whether as Clergy, Acolytes, Altar Servers, or the faithful gathered at Mass, understanding what's happening allows us to go beyond functions and steps. Behind the veil of liturgical prayers and motions is direct communication with Our Lord and our redemption. Consider for a moment the following reflections.

The Mass is Sacramental.

71.) Sacraments are visible signs of divine life or sanctifying grace. The actions and prayers reveal what the Father is doing through Christ in the Holy Spirit. From start to finish, every movement and prayer in Holy Mass reveals the action and life of the Holy Trinity.

Holy Mass is a Dialogue, not a Monologue.

72.) Mass is a conversation between the Lord and his Disciples, an exchange between the hearts of God and man. Through the sacred actions of the Liturgy, Christ Our Lord speaks to and for us. Our participation and responses are directed to the Priest and Jesus Christ, who is speaking through him.

Mass is an Exercise of Our Priesthood

73.) By right and duty of our Baptism, we are to be made holy before God, offering sacrifices, prayers, and supplications for ourselves and the People of God for our sanctification. For the Laity, we join our prayers and offerings to the Priest, who offers the perfect Sacrifice of the Altar. Priests fulfill a most sacred act in their priesthood. United to Christ in Holy Orders, Our Divine Lord is present and offered to the Father. Together, we offer the sacrificial Lamb of God for the salvation and sanctification of the world.

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The Mass is Incarnational

74.) John's Gospel reveals to us that "*the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*" ³⁰ The Fathers of the Church teach us that, at Mass, we are fed from "two tables," the Table of His Word and the Table of His Body. In the readings, the Word of God comes to us as a living word, giving the light of truth and life (***Table of His Word***). The Word-made flesh, who is true Man and true God, offers his flesh and blood as nourishment and life for the soul. In the Mass, Christ is present in words (*readings*) and deeds (***Table of His Body***).

Holy Mass is the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

75.) Everywhere and every time Mass is celebrated, our redemption and salvation are made visible in the sacred actions. What is revealed to us? God's most loving and merciful heart reveals the depths of his love. The Son of the Father presents himself anew, taking upon himself our sins and presenting them to the Father. God, the Holy Spirit, comes to us from the heart of Father and Son to give light where there is darkness and life where there is death.

Reflection

76.) Proper, reverent, and prayerful participation in Mass is an imitation of Our Divine Lord. In the Mass, we empty ourselves to receive him who is "*the way, the truth, and the life.*" ³¹ Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, we offer the Lamb of God to the Father. In this act of worship, adoration, and praise, we express our love and gratitude to the Lord Our God. His Sacred Heart loves us, so let us love him with our whole heart, mind, body, and soul.

³⁰ John 1:14

³¹ John 14:6

The Liturgy of the Eucharist



2. Preparation of the Gifts and the Altar

77.) From the moment of his Incarnation, Our Divine Lord's life was a journey leading to Calvary. The simple wooden manger that cradled him would become the wooden instrument and sign of our salvation, redemption, and reconciliation. Just as a disciple imitates the master, we as disciples imitate Our Lord. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the high point of the Mass and the Christian life. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ's Paschal Sacrifice and Banquet are not merely symbolized but are made truly present.³²

***He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house, I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples."*"³³**

78.) After the Liturgy of the Word, a collection is taken up accompanied by the singing of a hymn. Taking up a collection for the Church dates to Apostolic times. Altar servers bring the Missal and chalice with the Sacred Host and set them on the altar. Then bread, water, and wine are presented by the faithful. Servers place the bread from the faithful on the altar to be offered and blessed by the Priest.

79.) These are the basic steps seen during Mass, but what do they mean? What should we see with the eyes of faith? How can we participate and encounter Christ, Our Lord?

Setting the Lord's Table

80.) In every Mass and celebration of the Eucharist, the Paschal Banquet or Sacrificial Meal is being presented anew. Whether Altar Servers or the Faithful gathered, we prepare the altar/Lord's Table like the Apostles at the Last Supper. Setting the table or altar speaks of our faith and intention to have Christ present, and as Eternal High Priest to join his offering with ours to God the Father. The **Missal** (book of prayers), **chalice**, and **Sacred Host** are in anticipation and gratitude for being called to the Lord's Table. The Paschal Banquet or

³² GIRM #72, General Instruction on the Roman Missal

³³ Matthew 26:18, New American Bible

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Sacrificial Meal of Fellowship is not merely symbolic. The actions and prayers that we see and hear are Christ interceding for us to the Father, with the Holy Spirit.

Reflection

81.) When the collection is being gathered, are we giving from the heart in a spirit of fraternal charity as Christ did? Do we see the gifts (bread, water, and wine) as presenting ourselves to Christ before the Father? As the Lord's Table is being set, do we see Our Lord preparing the altar in heaven to offer Himself for us? At the presentation of the gifts and setting the altar, is it your heart's desire to sit at table and break bread with Our Lord? Our Lord, in his love and mercy, is preparing the table for the Passover Meal. Will you join Him?

Bread and Wine: Saying the Blessing

While they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed it.... and gave you thanks.³⁴

82.) As the Apostles reclined at the table with Our Lord in the Upper Room, we now gather around the altar during Mass. Through His Priest, the Divine Redeemer thanks the Father and blesses the bread and wine we will receive. In this way, Jesus makes the salvific events of the Last Supper present every time the Eucharist is celebrated. Every Mass is an encounter with Christ, who shares the sacrificial meal of fellowship with his disciples.

"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness, we have received the bread and wine we offer you: the fruit of the earth and vine and work of human hands. It will become the bread of life and spiritual drink".³⁵*(paraphrased)*

83.) After receiving the gifts, the Priest raises the paten with the bread, offering a prayer of thanks and blessing to God for providing the bread that will become Jesus' body and our "spiritual food." Altar servers present the water and wine to the Priest. **Water** signifies Jesus' divinity, and **wine** signifies his humanity. While mixing the water and wine, the Priest

³⁴ Matthew 26:26-27, New American Bible

³⁵ Roman Missal, Liturgy of the Eucharist, paragraphs 23-25, page 527

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prays that in this offering, we come to share in Christ's divinity as Christ shared our humanity.

84.) He raises the chalice and repeats a prayer, thanking God for providing the wine that will become Jesus' blood and our spiritual drink.³⁶ If the prayer is said aloud, the people gathered respond, ***"Blessed be God forever."***

85.) The Priest then bows and prays that we may be accepted by the Lord and our sacrifice may be pleasing to God. Assisted by the Altar Servers, the Priest washes his hands while praying in a low voice, ***"Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."***³⁷ How can the faithful engage more actively in the Mass as the Priest prepares the gifts?

86.) We should prepare to offer and receive our Eucharistic Lord. Offering bread and wine should speak of our desire for communion with Christ. Our response reflects our faith and gratitude for the spiritual food and drink provided to us. Is it your desire to share in Jesus' divine life? Ask the Lord as his table is set for hunger and thirst for his presence. Pray that God the Father grants the Priest's request that the bread and wine become Jesus' body and blood. As the table and altar are set, prepare to share the sacrificial meal with the Lord Jesus and your fellow disciples.

***"Pray, my brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God."***³⁸

87.) After the Priest gives thanks and washes his hands, he invites the faithful to join him in prayer. We join together, praying that the Sacrifice of the Altar is acceptable to the Lord Our God.

³⁶ Roman Missal, Liturgy of the Eucharist #25, page 527

³⁷ Roman Missal, Liturgy of the Eucharist #28, page 527

³⁸ Roman Missal, Liturgy of the Eucharist #29

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88.) Priest acts in the person of Christ. This sacred action is not a reflection of the personal holiness of the individual but is the reality of receiving ordination in Holy Orders. Priests receive a special grace, merited by Jesus Christ, to consecrate and offer a real sacrifice to the Father. So, our Priests are really and truly, by the power of God, offering the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ on behalf of the Church. Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, exercises his priesthood in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. ³⁹

89.) What of the faithful gathered? Having received Baptism and Confirmation, we share in Christ's priesthood or the "priesthood of the faithful." ⁴⁰ The life of the Baptized is to grow in union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Christ gave himself as the perfect sacrifice to the Father so that our hearts, minds, and souls would share in the divine life of grace. We join our prayer to the Priest so that God the Father will be pleased to receive our humble offering ***"for the praise and glory of his Name for our good and all his Church."*** ⁴¹

Prayer over the Gifts

90.) The Table of the Lord has been set on the altar and in heaven before the Father. Christ the Eternal High Priest, in the person of our Priest, invites the faithful to join him in prayer. What are we praying or asking for? As the Priest leads us, how do we make this prayer our own?

91.) The basic structure is to implore the Lord God to hear us. We thank and acknowledge the graces we have received. In the gifts, we offer a humble offering of ourselves at the altar of the Lord. Offering ourselves? In the Prayer Over the Gifts, we ask Our Lord to take all our struggles, works, and sacrifices and accept them. Simply put, we offer God our lives and all that we are.

³⁹ CCC #1548, Catechism of the Catholic Church

⁴⁰ CCC #1546-1547, Catechism of the Catholic Church

⁴¹ Roman Missal #29, Liturgy of the Eucharist

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“Through Christ Our Lord...Amen”

92.) Last but not least, we ask Our Lord to take our offering and unite it to his before the Father. In the mystical, holy drama of the Liturgy, we ask Our Lord Jesus to make us holy and acceptable to the Father. The Eucharistic liturgy is a desire of the heart and soul to be absorbed into Christ, to become one with him. We offer ourselves to Christ in preparation to receive him to the glory of the Father. We ask this “through Christ Our Lord.” In the face of such a great gift, we should not hesitate to join voices saying “Amen.”

93.) The preparation of the altar and offerings is now complete as we prepare to enter the heart of our Christian life and the liturgy. What follows is the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion, where Our Redeemer comes to his people and grants their request.

3. Eucharistic Prayer

“Lift up your Hearts...Let us give thanks to the Lord Our God.” ⁴²

94) The faithful have gathered, and the altar table prepared. We have given our gifts to be offered by the Priest, and he has said the blessing. This Eucharistic meal we are about to take part in is a meal of fellowship with each other and a sacrificial meal of communion with Our Lord. In the Eucharistic Prayers, the divine mystery of our redemption through Christ is praised and made present.

95.) Eucharistic prayers are structured the same, although the wording can differ depending on the liturgical season or the prayer chosen. So, essentially, the Eucharistic Prayer consists of the following parts. The faithful listen prayerfully, reverently, and with docility to the prayer said by the Priest.

Thanksgiving – The Priest, acting in Christ, calls upon those gathered to lift their hearts in faith, hope, and thanksgiving to the Father. As the Priest continues, he offers a prayer for

⁴² Roman Missal #99, Eucharistic Prayers

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the faithful, recounting the work of salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ. The prayer of thanksgiving naturally leads to a proclamation of praise and adoration.

Acclamation – Perhaps known better by the thrice-repeated "**Holy, Holy, Holy**". Together we join the Angels and Saints in heaven, glorifying God Most Holy. The words to the prayer come from the Gospel and the Book of Revelation. Praying with the Angels and Saints is a reference to our belief in the Communion of Saints, so it's an action of the whole Church.

96.) With heartfelt gratitude, hope, and faith, we praise and thank God the Father for what he has done through His Son. At the same time, we anticipate what will happen through the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is the source and summit of faith and worship. On the one hand, we thank the Lord Our God and praise him for becoming Man to die for our sins, reconciling us to the Father. On the other hand, we thank and praise Him for what will happen.

97.) Just as it pleased God to take up our human flesh and dwell among us, we now ask the same Holy Spirit to make the Crucified and Risen Christ present among us. Mary gave the Holy Spirit her womb so that He may form the God-Made-Man; the Priest offers bread and wine so that Christ may be truly present among us to the Father's good pleasure.

Epiclesis – At this point, we kneel in reverent prayer and adoration. "Epiclesis" comes from the Greek word "**to invoke or call down**". Kneeling is a statement of faith that Jesus Christ is truly present in the sacramental bread and wine. Kneeling is also an act of humility in the presence of God. We kneel to look upon Him who died and rose from the dead. With hands extended over the offerings, the Priest prays, "**Make holy these gifts by sending down your spirit upon them.**"⁴³ Altar Servers ring bells to call to mind the descent of the Holy Spirit. When the bells ring, something divine is happening.

98.) Calling down the Holy Spirit is not symbolic or simply a liturgical motion. Does your heart not desire God's presence? It pleased the Father to make His Son's sacrifice present for all time. Christ's sacrifice is not just a one-time historical event; it is an emptying of the

⁴³ Roman Missal #100-101, page 646. Eucharistic Prayers

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heart of God for all time. In an unbloody manner, Christ Jesus, Eternal High Priest, offers himself to the Father for our sake.

99.) It is less important to memorize the parts and names of the prayer. It is more important to be familiar with and introduced to what is happening and what is said. A great mystery is unfolding before our eyes as we prepare to receive the body and blood of Our Lord. It was and is the Father's good pleasure to redeem humanity and remain with us always.

Consecration, the Presence of the Lord Jesus

"At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion." ⁴⁴

100) After calling upon the Holy Spirit to consecrate the gifts and make them holy, the prayer continues with the Institution of Christ's sacrifice. Repeating the Lord's words from the Gospel, the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. At the raising of the chalice and host, the bells draw our attention to what has occurred.

"This is my Body; this is my Blood." ⁴⁵

101.) Standing at the altar is Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, offering himself to the Father as a sin offering. It is no longer our priest raising a cup and bread, but Christ the sacrificial victim offering himself for our salvation and redemption. **NOTE:** Christ, the Lamb of God, continues to offer himself to the Father as he did on Calvary. We are witnesses to the ultimate act of sacrificial love. Our Lord and Redeemer is truly present on the altar; in the same way he stands before the Father in heaven. The Last Supper narrative or the **consecration**, because Christ, true man and true God, is now present.

⁴⁴ Roman Missal #102, Eucharistic Prayers

⁴⁵ Mt 26:25-28, Lk 22:19-20, Mk 14:22-25

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Reflect: At the consecration, Our Lord and Sacrificial Lamb is present, to offer your needs, prayers, and intentions to the Father. Our Divine and Eternal High Priest stands at the altar in heaven and presents you to the Father. His body and blood are payment for reconciliation and salvation.

102.) The priest and the faithful, prayerfully listening, continue praising the memory of Christ's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension.⁴⁶ This part is called the "**anamnesis**," coming from the Greek word for memory. You'll recognize the words **"Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection."**⁴⁷

103.) The "**oblation and intercession**" follow.⁴⁸ We pray that in offering Christ to the Father, we unite ourselves to Christ and share in his resurrection to eternal life. **"Lord, remember your Church..."** Priest and faithful ask the Lord to remember and intercede for the Church, those living, and those who have died. Remembering the Church is also a plea to strengthen us and preserve the unity **"with N our Pope and N our Bishop and all your Clergy."** We ask that through Christ's sacrifice, we grow in fellowship and perfect charity so that we join the angels and saints in heaven.

Doxology or Conclusion

"Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the holy spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever."⁴⁹

104.) Raising the Lord's body and blood before the faithful gathered, a prayer of glorification is said. Christ, present and acting through his priest, presents himself before us. The doxology is a proclamation of our faith and the truth concerning Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus Christ that we have access to the Father. It is only in Christ that we can share eternal life. It is with Christ and the Holy Spirit that we give glory to the Father. The

⁴⁶ GIRM (General Instruction on the Roman Missal), #79.e

⁴⁷ Roman Missal #105, Eucharistic Prayers

⁴⁸ GIRM #79. F and G, Roman Missal #105

⁴⁹ Roman Missal #106, Eucharistic Prayers

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Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the glorification of God, in which the faithful affirm with **“Amen.”** With the ending of the Eucharistic Prayer, we move on to the Communion Rite.

4. The Communion Rite

“Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that, following the Lord's command, his Body and Blood should be received as spiritual food by those of the faithful who are properly disposed.”⁵⁰

105.) The sons and daughters of God have been gathered together in prayer and worship. As disciples, faithful to Our Divine Lord, we have prepared his table/altar to celebrate and offer the sacrificial meal of fellowship. We have offered our gifts, prayers, and intentions to join them with Christ's redemptive sacrifice before the Father in the Holy Spirit.

106.) Our Priest, acting in the person of Christ, has called down the power of the Holy Spirit and sanctified the gifts to make them holy. The simple gifts of bread and wine became the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. Our Divine Redeemer spoke to us in the Scriptures now; he wishes to feed our souls with his divine life. The following reflections serve to prepare us to receive Holy Communion.

The Lord's Prayer

107.) The Priest gives a short ***invitation, “At the Lord's Command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say.”***⁵¹ The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, summarizes the Gospel and the effects of communion with God. In the Lord's prayer, addressing God as Father comes from the Baptismal graces we have received. Our prayer summarizes the desire in the heart and soul, full communion with Our Lord, the Kingdom of God, holy purity, and protection from sin and evil. The Holy Eucharist reveals its power and intention to our needy souls. Why do we stand? Standing expresses the desire to receive from God. So we stand to address him and ask to receive him.

⁵⁰ General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM) #80, Communion Rite

⁵¹ Roman Missal #124, Communion Rite

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"Deliver us, Lord, from every evil.....as we wait in joyful hope." ⁵²

108.) Next, the Priest prays the ***"embolism"***. The embolism is a plea on behalf of the faithful, including himself, to the Father through the Son. The embolism asks for deliverance from evil, peace, and mercy. It's a prayer filled with hope, faith, and trust.

"For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever." ⁵³

109.) Together, we pray the ***"doxology"***. This is an expression and praise of God. Together we praise the All-Powerful God for establishing his kingdom in and among us. We praise him for his sacrificial gift to be received. Put simply, in what we have seen so far, we praise the Lord for the great and loving works he has shown us.

Rite of Peace

"Peace I leave you, my peace I give you." ⁵⁴

110.) Holy Communion could be called the "Peace Sacrament". Dying on the cross as a sin offering to the Father, Jesus Christ made peace between man and God. What is peace? The simple answer is that it's more than a feeling. Peace is a state of being or a relation between two people. In this instance, God brought reconciliation between man and Himself, eliminating our estrangement from Him. Peace is a harmony, a oneness between people that radiates from the heart and soul.

111.) Standing behind the altar, the Priest calls upon the Lord to look upon the faith of the Church and grant us his peace. ***"Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who lives and reigns forever and ever."*** ⁵⁵

⁵² GIRM #81, The Lord's Prayer. Also, Roman Missal #125, Communion Rite

⁵³ Roman Missal #125, Communion Rite

⁵⁴ Roman Missal #126, Communion Rite; GIRM #82 Rite of Peace

⁵⁵ Roman Missal #126, Rite of Peace

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112.) Listening prayerfully and with humble trust, the faithful respond with the affirmative “*Amen*”. In the name of Christ Our Lord, the Priest says, ***“the peace of the Lord be with all of you”***, to which we respond, ***“and with your spirit”***.

Peace be with you – Sign of Peace ⁵⁶

113.) After a short invitation, we offer each other the sign of peace. The sign of peace should be done with reverence, bearing in mind the dignity of Mass. Giving others peace is bearing witness to the divine peace given to them by the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The sign of peace gives public testimony of our desire, faith, and hope in the peace of Christ. We cannot have peace between people without first receiving peace from our Divine Lord. As we have freely received peace with God, so we freely give that peace to others.

114.) Christ brings us reconciliation and peace in the Sacrament of the Altar. Our Redeemer and Lord wants to reunite your life with his intimately. The prayers and Rites are preparations for the blessed union.

Breaking of Bread

“May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.” ⁵⁷ (Priest’s Prayer).

115.) *“Then he takes the host, breaks it over the paten, and places a small piece in the chalice...”* ⁵⁸ The breaking of the bread is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper. Breaking bread is where this part of the Communion Rite gets its name, ***“The Fraction of the Bread.”*** ⁵⁹ In imitation of our Blessed Redeemer, the Priest breaks the host and places a small piece into the chalice. As he does this, he prays for himself and all those

⁵⁶ Roman Missal #127, Rite of Peace, Eucharistic Prayers

⁵⁷ Roman Missal, Communion Rite #129

⁵⁸ Roman Missal, Communion Rite #129

⁵⁹ GIRM, General Instruction on the Roman Missal #83

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about to receive Holy Communion. We should call to mind that Jesus broke the bread to give it to his disciples. Jesus' body was broken for the sake of our redemption and sanctification. Reflect for a moment that breaking the host is the beginning and consummation of our redemption and reconciliation with the Father.

Lamb of God, Have Mercy on Us

116.) While still standing, the faithful either chant or say the ***"Agnus Dei" or Lamb of God***⁶⁰ Prayer. Three times, Our Divine Redeemer and Sacred Victim is addressed as the Lamb of God. ***"Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us." The final time, we end with "grant us your peace."***

117.) That was the Lord's purpose in becoming man to be offered up for our sake. Lamb of God is an act of hope, faith, and a plea for mercy. In this prayer, we encounter Our Lord and invite him into our lives. We address Him as our Sacrificial Lamb as we prepare to receive him in Holy Communion. We kneel after the "Lamb of God."

5. Communion

118.) The Priest and faithful prepare themselves to receive the Lord's body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. How? Pray to receive Our Lord humbly and with proper intention. Ask the Lord for the gift of sanctifying grace, protection from evil, and an increase in virtue. Jesus is coming to you. Where in your heart, mind, and soul do you need him most? The Priest prays in silence that he also receives communion worthily and fruitfully.

"Behold the Lamb of God"⁶¹

119.) The Priest then raises the host and chalice and proclaims, ***"Behold the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the Lamb's supper."*** It is no longer bread and wine that are present, but Christ the Lord. We were baptized for this

⁶⁰ GIRM #83, Roman Missal #130

⁶¹ Roman Missal #132

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moment, to be redeemed by him. His death gives us eternal life. What a blessing it is to be called to the Lord's Supper! Our reconciliation, redemption, and sanctification stand at the altar. Our Lord calls you to join him and receive him.

120.) Our response is one of humility, not humiliation or shame. Like the centurion in the Gospel, we respond, **"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but just say the Word, and I will be healed."**⁶² None of us is perfect or worthy; this is what makes the Eucharist a loving and merciful gift. Our Divine Lord gives himself freely, based on his merit, not ours. Our response is one of great trust and faith that Jesus will do as He has promised.

The Body of Christ.....Amen

121.) After the Priest reverently consumes the Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist is distributed to the faithful. A communion hymn is sung during this time. Communion is a period of reflection and prayer. Not only are we to receive Him reverently, but we should also receive Him prayerfully. Receiving Holy Communion deepens our bond with Christ, allowing His presence to dwell within us and empowering our faith.⁶³ Christ's body and blood were given up as a sin offering, so to receive him is to receive forgiveness of sins.⁶⁴

122.) The Eucharist makes the Church the Mystical Body.⁶⁵ Our Divine Redeemer unites us with Himself and makes us holy. Just as Jesus fed the multitude in the Gospels, so now he feeds all those who receive him. So, when the Sacred Host is held before you, your amen is saying yes to Christ. Amen is proclaiming your desire to have the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ in your heart and soul. Holy Communion is the Father's will to be transformed into the image of the Son.

⁶² Matthew 8:5-13, Roman Missal #131-132

⁶³ CCC #1391, Catechism of the Catholic Church

⁶⁴ CCC #1393, Catechism of the Catholic Church

⁶⁵ CCC #1396, Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Liturgy of the Eucharist



After Communion

123.) After receiving Our Lord, we spend a moment in prayer thanking Jesus for his great gift. Thank him for counting us worthy to be in his company and receiving him. Christ the Lord lives within you. Wherever you go, he is there with you. During this time, the vessels are purified and the chalice covered. Any remaining hosts are placed in the Tabernacle. ⁶⁶

124.) The Priest and faithful stand for the Prayer after Communion.⁶⁷ The Priest leads the faithful in prayer, and we respond with "amen." What is the ***"Prayer after Communion?"*** The Priest exercising the Priesthood of Christ prays that the sacrament we have received bears fruit in the lives of the faithful.

6. Concluding Rite

Commission

125.) The Concluding Rite brings Mass to a close, at least liturgically. With everyone standing, announcements are made, and then the Priest gives the final blessing. Afterward, the faithful are dismissed. Just as Christ sent his Apostles, so now he sends us. ***"Go forth, the Mass has ended."*** The Christian life must bear fruit, or it slowly dies. It is our vocation to spread the truth of Jesus Christ. Having received Christ's life, we also receive his mission. Our response of Amen is to say yes to that vocation. The Priest with the Altar Servers and or Deacon reverences the altar with a profound bow and then processes out of the Church. The question remains for us: do we leave Mass in the Church or carry it with us?

⁶⁶ Roman Missal #137

⁶⁷ GIRM #89

The Liturgy of the Eucharist



Conclusion

127.) The Eucharist is the Lord's precious giving of himself to us. Mass is the high point of worship and praise of the Lord Jesus to the glory of the Father. In the Mass, the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit summon the People of God to praise and worship him. In return, the Divine Redeemer and Teacher speaks lovingly to his people. Our Lord addresses us as friends and invites us to fellowship and communion with him. From the Table of the Altar, Christ offers himself to the Father for our sake. At every Mass, the Lord repeats his never-ending offer of mercy, love, and redemption. Each time the Eucharist is celebrated, the Lord Jesus opens his Sacred Heart and presents us to the Father.

128.) It is hoped that this walk-through of the Mass has shed some light on what is happening during the Divine Liturgy. Perhaps this work may lead you deeper into an encounter with the Lord Jesus. The more we know about the Mass, the better we can participate in it. Our encounter with the living Christ grows with our active and prayerful participation in the liturgy.

The Peace of the Lord be with you,
Timothy Andries
Catechist