

# Parts of the Holy Mass – Formation Series

## Week 1: Introductory Rites

### The Procession

The Opening Procession marks the start of the Holy Mass, setting the tone for the sacred celebration. Leading the procession is the cross, a powerful symbol of Jesus Christ, guiding us toward worship. Next are the altar servers, lector, deacon, and priest, all moving together toward the sanctuary as the opening hymn is sung.

Upon reaching the steps of the sanctuary, the ministers pause and bow in reverence—either with a genuflection or a profound bow—acknowledging the altar as a representation of Christ. The deacon then places the Book of Gospels on the altar, symbolizing the deep connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Next, both the priest and deacon venerate the altar with a kiss, while the other ministers take their designated places.

The Opening Procession invites us to transition from the busyness of daily life into the sacred space of the liturgy, preparing our hearts to participate fully as one body in Christ.

***Did you know?*** “You will see the priest and servers genuflect at times during the Mass. When the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary of the church, the priest and servers genuflect when they approach the altar at the beginning of Mass and when they depart from it after the final blessing (General Instruction for the Roman Missal, no. 274; Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite, no. 199). The priest also genuflects at the altar after the elevation of the consecrated host, after the elevation of the chalice, and before receiving Holy Communion (GIRM, no. 274). The priest’s genuflection at these points in the Mass helps us recall the incredible gift of Jesus present in the Most Holy Eucharist. Since during Mass, the focus is on the altar, you will notice that at other times during the Mass, the ministers bow as they cross the sanctuary.” (Fr. Luke Spannagel, The National Eucharistic Revival, Walk through the Mass)

Each of us is called to make a gesture of reverence upon arriving for Mass. Before taking your seat in the pew, pause to genuflect toward the tabernacle, honoring the presence of Christ. A genuflection involves lowering your right knee to the ground. Once Mass begins, our reverence shifts toward the altar, the symbol of Christ's sacrifice. As you depart, remember to genuflect once more toward the tabernacle, acknowledging His sacred presence.

***A helpful practice:*** Arrive at least 10 minutes before Mass to settle in, pray, and ready yourself for worship. Engage fully by joining in the opening hymn and reflect on the cross leading us forward, remembering the profound sacrifice of Jesus.

~Fr. Jim, Perkl, Pastor & Roxanne Tozier, Parish Ministry Director

### The Sign of the Cross

The Mass is one complete prayer that begins and ends with the Sign of the Cross. It is a source of divine power and protection that invokes God’s presence and invites him to bless us, assist us, and guard us from all harm.

The Sign of the Cross has dual meaning. It expresses our desire to be the faithful ones set apart from the corrupt ways of the world. It also invokes God’s protection for our lives. The Sign of the Cross is not for Mass alone but for any time we want to declare our faithfulness and ask for

protection, it is especially fitting as we prepare to encounter his presence in the scripture readings and in the Eucharist.

***Did you know?*** In Ezekiel 9, we hear of the faithful people of Jerusalem receiving an X or a cross on their foreheads in the midst of a cultural crisis to protect them from the judgment to come. Similarly, Revelation 7:3 tells us that all saints in heaven have a seal upon their foreheads. This too, as our Sign of the Cross, was also a sign of faithfulness and protection.

***A helpful practice:*** Make every Sign of the Cross with careful attention and reverence. Avoid signing yourself in a hurried manner but rather make a large cross, taking time, thinking what you do. Remember, you are invoking God's protection from evil and declaring your faithfulness.

## **Apostolic Greeting**

"The Lord be with you" is no ordinary greeting. It is not an exchange like "Good morning" and "Good morning to you, Father". By virtue of Baptism, the priest is praying that the divine life we received may continue to grow within us.

Heroes from the Bible like Moses (Exodus 3:10-12), Gideon (Judges 6:14-18), Joshua (Joshua 1:4-6,9) and the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:28), God sends on daunting missions. When he calls someone in this way, either he or his angel addresses the person with the assurance that "the Lord is with you". In turn, if we can rely more on God rather than just ourselves, we can face challenges with confidence and peace knowing that the Lord will be with us.

When we respond with "and with your spirit", it is more than a simple "God bless you too". We are asking the priest to "be the priest we need you to be" in the Sacred Liturgy and support his mission. We are acknowledging the Holy Spirit's unique activity through the priest in persona Christi or "in the person of Christ" by virtue of his ordination. Our prayer is that the priest approaches the sacred mysteries with the reverence and devotion worthy of God.

***Did you know?*** The call and response of "The Lord be with you" and "And with your spirit" is spoken in each of the 4 parts of the Mass: The Introductory Rites, The Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of the Eucharist, and The Concluding Rite.

***A helpful practice:*** In the face of trial or on a call to mission, remind yourself to find encouragement that you are not alone – God is with you. When we hear "The Lord be with you" at Mass, these words serve as a reminder that the same God who was with Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and the Blessed Mother is also with us to guide and help us through the struggles we face each day.

*~Janet Gorshe, Pastoral Care Coordinator/Synod Team*