



Understanding the Catholic Mass



Parts of the Mass

1. Introductory Rites

- 1a. Apostolic Greeting
- 1b. Act of Penitence
- 1c. Gloria
- 1d. Collect

2. Liturgy of the Word

- 2a. Biblical Readings
- 2b. Homily
- 2c. Profession of Faith
- 2d. Prayer of the Faithful

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

- 3a. Preparation of the Gifts
- 3b. Eucharistic Prayer
- 3c. Lord's Prayer
- 3d. Rite of Peace
- 3e. Fraction Rite
- 3f. Communion

4. Concluding Rites

Answer the questions about each part of the Mass.
Find out how much you already know! And find out what's surprising.

Introduction about the Mass

The Eucharistic celebration of Mass is:

- an intimate encounter with the Living God
- the source and summit of our Christian lives
- a taste of heaven here on earth
- where we celebrate the presence of the risen Christ among us
- where our identity as Christ's brothers and sisters is formed
- where we receive the mandate to transform the world by the power of His love and through works of mercy and justice
- where people of every race, language, and way of life become one.

➤ Which of these descriptions of the Mass is most meaningful to you? Why?

Introductory Rites

➤ **Hymn:** Why do we start Mass by singing as a congregation?

Singing, first of all, takes us out of ourselves.

➤ **Procession:** Why do the priest and other ministers of the liturgy walk down the aisle with the crucifix and book of the Gospels?

Apostolic Greeting

➤ Why does the priest kiss the altar?

➤ Why do we make the sign of the cross?

➤ Why does the priest dialog with the congregation saying, "The Lord be with you"?

Act of Penitence

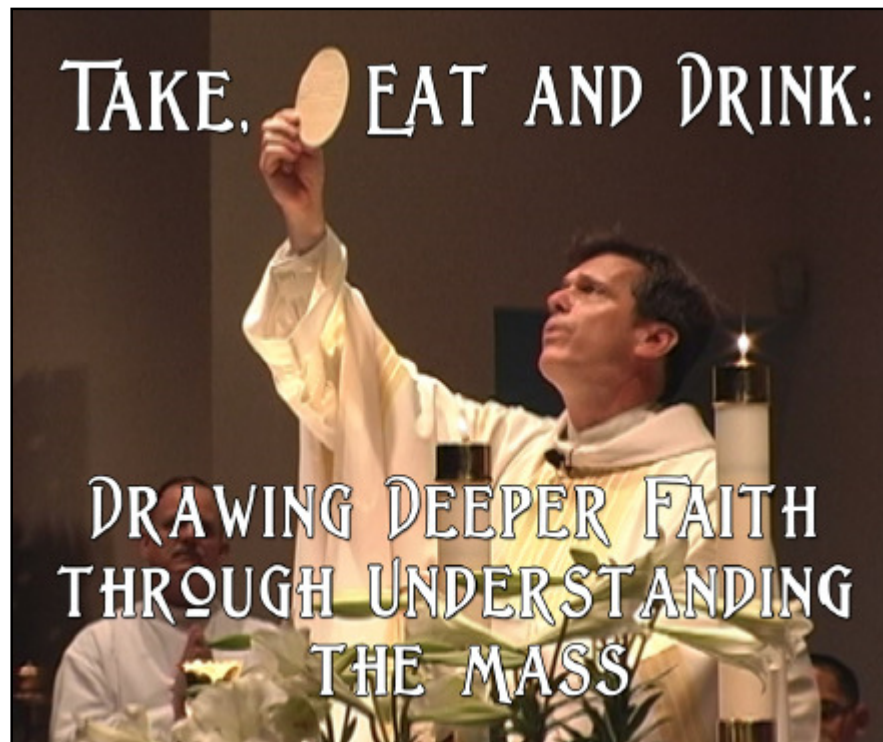
➤ Why is it good to think about our sins early in the Mass?

➤ How can thinking about this before Mass prepare us for a better experience of the Eucharist?

We are entering into something bigger than ourselves.



Catechist Guide for Understanding the Catholic Mass



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4. Concluding Rites

Instruct participants to look at the questions first, then look for the answers during the presentation. How many can they answer before the presentation? Optionally, assign this as homework for after the presentation. This can also be divided into multiple weeks. Use the questions to generate discussions. Most questions have more than one answer; sample answers are provided below.

First give an introduction about the Mass

The Eucharistic celebration of Mass is:

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➤ Which of these descriptions of the Mass is most meaningful to you? Why?

Open the discussion.

Introductory Rites

- **Hymn:** Why do we start Mass by singing as a congregation?
Song unites us. The song is a sung prayer that unites us in voice and in spirit and heart.
- **Procession:** Why do the priest and other ministers of the liturgy walk down the aisle with the crucifix and book of the Gospels?
By looking at this procession we unite ourselves to them, because we share a common priesthood through our baptisms.

Singing, first of all, takes us out of ourselves.

Apostolic Greeting

- Why does the priest kiss the altar?
The altar reflects the presence of Christ's love among us.
- Why do we make the sign of the cross?
To remind ourselves that we have been baptized into the life of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Why does the priest dialog with the congregation saying, "The Lord be with you"?
It establishes that we are a gathering of the Church. It's also a statement of what we really believe is present: that the Lord is present in the gathering.

Act of Penitence

- Why is it good to think about our sins early in the Mass?
We start Mass in a spirit of humility, recognizing that we are not the center of the universe and that we need God's healing grace.
- How can thinking about this before Mass prepare us for a better experience of the Eucharist?
We don't have enough time during the actual Penitential Rite to remember enough about why we need Jesus to heal us from sin.

We are entering into something bigger than ourselves.