

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- The Mass has two main parts.
- The Mass makes present Christ's dying and rising.
- Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.

"Then [Jesus] took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.'"

Luke 22:19–20

The Mass

The Mass is so important to Catholics that we participate in it every Sunday or Saturday evening. Many Catholics also attend Mass on weekdays.

Mass has been important enough over the centuries that people have died defending and exercising their religious freedom to participate in the Mass. In some places still today, Catholic priests offer the Mass in secret.

- *What regular activities do you consider essential in your life? Why?*



Why Is the Mass So Important?

At Mass, Catholics remember what Jesus did at the Last Supper. Jesus' words, "Do this in memory of me" have been obeyed without interruption for more than 2,000 years. Every time Catholics gather for Mass, we know we're there to do what Jesus commanded. And we believe that Jesus is made present to us.

Also known as the sacrament or sacrifice of the **Eucharist**, the **Mass** is our most precious prayer. It is a **liturgy**, part of the public worship or "work" of the Church and is "the summit and source of our Christian life...[I]n the Eucharist is found the entire treasure of the Church—Jesus Christ" (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 228).

Let's briefly examine the principal parts of the Mass.

The Introductory Rites

The introductory rites bring the community together as one. The entrance of the priest and ministers completes the community—the people of God—in whose midst Christ is present.

As Mass begins, the priest leads us in the Sign of the Cross. We respond, "Amen." Response and participation are essential to liturgy. The prayer comes alive as each of us responds, listens, reflects, speaks, and sings.

Our awareness of God's presence reminds us that we haven't always lived as we should. We take part in a **Penitential Act**, which involves asking for and receiving God's forgiveness, perhaps with a prayer or the chant, "Lord, have mercy."

Next comes the “Gloria,” an ancient hymn of praise. The opening lines from Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth express our wonder at what God has done. Then the priest says, “Let us pray,” and pauses for silence. Moments of silence provide space for a deeper experience of God’s presence. The priest gathers or collects our prayers in a prayer called the Collect.

Why So Much Sitting, Standing, and Kneeling?

God created us with physical bodies, so we worship God with our bodies, minds, and spirits. We *stand* as a sign of reverence—when encountering Christ in the gospel, in the Eucharist, and in moments of important conversation with God. We *sit* to listen and reflect. We *kneel* to express our humility before God and our adoration of God.

“At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth.”

Philippians 2:10

The Liturgy of the Word

The **Liturgy of the Word** is the first of two main parts of the Mass. We listen and reflect on the presence of God in the words of sacred Scripture.

1. The *First Reading* is from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season). It usually relates to the Gospel.
2. The *Responsorial Psalm* is a hymn of praise from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. The psalms were composed as song-prayers so it’s usually sung or chanted with the assembled people repeating a response.
3. The *Second Reading* is from the epistles (letters) of Paul or another New Testament letter. This reading doesn’t always relate to

the others but exposes us to more of sacred Scripture.

4. The *Gospel Acclamation*, usually an **Alleluia**—“Praise ye the Lord”—or another acclamation during Lent, acknowledges and welcomes Christ’s presence in God’s word.
5. The *Gospel* reading is proclaimed by the priest or deacon and is given highest honor because it contains the words of Jesus. With a thumb, we trace a small cross on our forehead, lips, and chest and silently pray these or similar words: *May your word, O Lord, be in my thoughts, on my lips, and in my heart.*
6. The **homily** follows the Gospel. In the homily, the priest or deacon explains the Scripture proclaimed at this Mass and applies it to our lives today.

How Are the Readings Chosen?

The Sunday Mass readings are arranged so that over a three-year period almost all of the New Testament and a varied selection from the Old Testament will be proclaimed. A new cycle begins each Advent. Year A features the Gospel of Matthew; Year B, Mark; and Year C, Luke. John’s Gospel is usually read during Easter, Christmas, and to fill out Year B because Mark’s Gospel is short. The Mass readings are proclaimed from a book called the **Lectionary**.

7. We stand and recite the main beliefs of our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed or Apostles’ Creed.
8. A deacon or lector presents our **petitions** (requests or appeals) in the **Universal Prayer**, also called the *Prayer of the Faithful* or general intercessions. After each petition we say, “Lord, hear our prayer” or a similar response.

Write Your Own Petition

Fill in the blanks to express a need to God in prayer:

For [person, group, situation] _____,

that [request or appeal] _____,

we pray to the Lord.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

We celebrate the wondrous deeds of God in every celebration of the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**, the second main part of the Mass.

Preparation of the Gifts

In the **offertory** or *Presentation of the Gifts*, we express our participation by making an offering, bringing to the altar the bread and wine for the Eucharist and our monetary contributions for the needs of the Church and the poor.

The bread and wine become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. God, who is never outdone in generosity, returns to us more than we could ever give.

- What can you offer God this week? How can your life become a living offering? (Mark 12:33; Ephesians 5:1–2)



The Eucharistic Prayer

This prayer is the center and highest point of the Mass. It's spoken by the priest but is the prayer of the entire community.

1. *Acclamation of Praise*. All the faithful in heaven and on earth join in a song or chant of praise. The words of the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy)

come from Isaiah 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!" and Matthew 21:9: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest."

2. *Calling Upon God to Send the Spirit*. The priest asks God to send the Holy Spirit to achieve a twofold conversion: changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and conforming us into the image of Christ.
3. *Institution Narrative and Consecration*. The priest recounts the Last Supper: how Jesus took the bread, blessed it, gave thanks, and said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26–28).

In this moment of **consecration**, "the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present, under the species of bread and wine, Christ's Body and Blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross for all" (CCC 1353). We call this the **Real Presence** of Christ in the Eucharist.

4. *Memorial Acclamation*. The people proclaim "the mystery of faith"—that Jesus died for our sins, rose from death, and will return in glory.
5. *Remembering*. God's saving actions, accomplished in Christ, are remembered, not as past events but as events that continue to accomplish their effects here and now. Remembering isn't just a recalling of the past; it's making the past present in our midst. This bringing of the past into the present is what Jesus meant when he said, "Do this in memory of me."

6. *Offering.* The offering of Jesus is accompanied with prayers of intercession for the entire Church, living and dead. The priest raises the bread and chalice—a gesture suggestive of offering. It’s no longer Jesus alone who is offered to the Father; it’s now Jesus *with* the Church.
7. *Great Amen.* An enthusiastic “Amen” places the seal of the community’s approval on all that’s been said and done in the Eucharistic Prayer.


The Communion Rite

1. *The Lord’s Prayer.* This prayer reminds us that God is our Father and that we depend on him for everything.
2. *The Sign of Peace.* We exchange a sign of unity and communion with one another and with God.
3. *Communion.* Following the Lamb of God prayer asking for God’s mercy, we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in holy Communion. We, though many, become one body in Christ. Each of us is empowered to share in the life and work of Christ, to bring him to all we meet.

The Concluding Rites

Following a blessing, the priest or deacon commissions those assembled to live out the challenges of the Gospel, bringing Christ to the world and also discovering him there.


• *What is your life’s purpose? What might your mission be as Christ’s disciple?*



Compare the Mass to the family table, where a family comes together to nourish and embrace each member as part of the family unit.

• *What, including food, is brought to the table?*

• *How does each person contribute and participate?*




Journey of Faith for Adults: Inquiry, Q9 (826252)

Imprimi Potest: Stephen T. Rehrauer, CSSR, Provincial, Denver Province, the Redemptorists.
Imprimatur: “In accordance with CIC 827, permission to publish has been granted on March 7, 2016, by the Most Reverend Edward M. Rice, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of St. Louis. Permission to publish is an indication that nothing contrary to Church teaching is contained in this work. It does not imply any endorsement of the opinions expressed in the publication; nor is any liability assumed by this permission.”
 Journey of Faith © 1993, 2005, 2016 Liguori Publications, Liguori, MO 63057. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, stored, transmitted, or posted in any form by any means without prior written permission. Contributing writers: Fr. Robert Riecheck, CSSR; Br. Daniel Korn, CSSR; Fr. James Ryan, CSSR; Fr. Oscar Lukefahr, CM; William H. Shannon. Editors of 2016 edition: Denise Bossert, Julia DiSalvo, and Joan McKamey. Design: Lorena Mitre Jimenez. Images: Shutterstock. Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. Excerpts from English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America © 1994 United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* © 1997 United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. ç Compliant with *The Roman Missal, Third Edition*.



Printed in the United States of America.
 20 19 18 17 16 / 5 4 3 2 1. Third Edition.