

# ORDER OF MASS:

## *The Introductory Rites*

---

### **WHAT ARE THE INTRODUCTORY RITES?**

The Introductory Rites "ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily." (#46)

They "have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation." (#46)

The components of the Introductory Rites of the order of Mass are:

#### **The Entrance Procession**

#### **Sign of the Cross and Greeting**

#### **Act of Penitence**

#### **The Gloria**

#### **Collect**

+++++

### **HOW DO THEY GO AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN?**

#### ***The Entrance Procession***

Led by the crossbearer, a procession of liturgical ministers (servers, reader or lector, sometimes the deacon, and the priest-presider) moves to the altar. As they arrive near the altar, all make a profound bow toward it. The altar/table is a symbol of Christ as the head or center of the faithful, because he is the sacrifice for sin and the meal that nourishes us.

The priest and deacon reverence the altar with a kiss. Because there are relics of saints "buried" in the table, this gesture embraces not only Christ but also the tradition of living faith that we celebrate.

The procession is accompanied by a hymn or chant which is meant to foster unity in the congregation and direct our attitudes and thoughts toward the prayerful celebration of that day's Eucharist.

The entrance procession symbolizes the gathering of the Body of Christ, the Church, in the presence of our triune God in prayer.

#### ***Sign of the Cross and Greeting***

When we are all gathered together, breathing together and our hearts beating together as we finish singing the entrance hymn, we make the sign of the cross. This familiar gesture identifies us: we gather in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), a baptized people (in the name of...), redeemed by the cross of Christ.

By the greeting, the priest-presider draws the congregation's attention to the presence of the Lord in our midst, and our response, "and with your spirit," acknowledges that presence.

The priest-presider may then briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day.

#### ***Act of Penitence***

Recalling our baptism and having gathered in the Lord's presence, we immediately recognize and acknowledge our sinfulness. We have not lived fully and faithfully the life of Christ. So by and act of penitence we

call to mind our sins and recommit ourselves to live in Christ.

There are ten different formulas that can be used here. In one way or another, the petition *Kyrie eleison* (Greek for "Lord, have mercy") is used. This is really the only prayer we can ever say when we recognize our sin and unworthiness before God.

During Lent and at other appropriate times, the act of penitence and *Kyrie* are sung and the attitude of repentance can be enhanced by kneeling during it.

On some Sundays, especially during the Easter season, the blessing and sprinkling of water may replace the act of penitence. This rite emphasizes our baptismal identity and recommit us to live it.

### ***The Gloria***

The *Gloria*, or "Glory to God," is a very ancient hymn of praise, the first lines of which echo the song of the angels who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. It is really a series of near ecstatic acclamations, naming God with wonder and awe.

Ordinarily, the *Gloria* is sung by all either in unison or alternately with choir/cantor and congregation.

The *Gloria* is omitted during the season of Advent so that we may sing the song of the angels with renewed joy at Christmas. It is also omitted during the season of Lent because there is no room for such exuberant joy when we are reckoning with our sin.

### ***The Collect***

The priest-presider then invites the congregation to pray. Some moments of silence allow a prayerfulness to settle over the community as we continue to remember the presence of the Lord and to join our individual prayers with the prayer of all.

The collect or opening prayer is prayed. It gathers or collects together all the prayers we come to church with in the spirit of the eucharistic celebration that has now begun.

The people's response, "Amen," makes the prayer their own.

### ***Overall***

One liturgist once called the Introductory Rites "the cluttered vestibule." This is a little unfair. There *are* a lot of different elements packed into a short amount of time. But the overall movement serves the purposes of gathering together our diverse lives and experiences of faith, uniting us as a baptized People, one Body of Christ, and preparing us to hear the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist.

The material in this insert is based on paragraphs #46-54 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002). The full text is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at 1-800-235-8722 or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

rjkennedy12/10

# ORDER OF MASS:

## *The Liturgy of the Word*

---

### WHAT IS THE LITURGY OF THE WORD?

"When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel."

"For in the readings, as explained by the homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own, and they also affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour out their petitions in the prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world."

The components of the Liturgy of the Word are:

**Reading I** (from the Old Testament or, in the Easter season, the Acts of the Apostles)

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Reading II** (from the New Testament)

**The Acclamation before the Gospel**

**Gospel Reading**

**Homily**

**The Profession of Faith**

**The Prayers of the Faithful**

### LIFE-GIVING CONVERSATION

The Liturgy of the Word has the structure of conversation: a conversation initiated by God with his beloved People. Here's how it goes:

**God speaks.** Taking the voice, faith and spirit of the reader (or lector), God speaks to us through the Old Testament, the words coming to us from our Jewish ancestors. Reading I might be a story from the history of Israel or a selection from the prophetic and wisdom literature. (Throughout the Easter season, Reading I is taken from the Acts of the Apostles.)

**We respond.** Having listened attentively to God's Word, we make a brief acclamation of praise: "Thanks be to God." Then we fall silent for a moment to allow God's Word to settle into our minds and hearts. A good question to ask ourselves is: what word, phrase or image catches my attention?

Then using God's own Word from the Book of Psalms, we respond more fully by singing the Responsorial Psalm. Selected as a direct response to the first reading, the Psalm fosters meditation on the Word of God.

**God speaks again.** God's Word comes alive for us this time from the letters (or epistles) and other non-gospel writings of the New Testament.

**We respond again.** Hearing the voice of God through those first Christian writers, we again express our praise and fall silent.

The movement of the Liturgy of the Word then quickens. Music begins and all stand. With the acclamation before the Gospel,

"the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to it in the Gospel and professes its faith by means of the chant."

**Christ speaks.** Taking the voice, faith and spirit of the deacon or priest, Christ Jesus continues to reveal himself to us in the stories and teachings of the gospel narratives (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). We stand in joyful attention to hear his words, as the eager crowds of his own time did.

**We respond.** Having heard the Word so central to our faith, our acclamation is more elaborate: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." We again fall silent for a moment to let the words of the gospel sink in.

**The Homily in the conversation.** The focus of the conversation does NOT shift to the preacher and congregation; it remains on the congregation and God. It is the preacher's task to foster a deeper conversation between God and God's beloved People. Although God's word in scripture "is addressed to all people of every era and is understandable to them, nevertheless, a fuller understanding and a greater effectiveness of the word is fostered by a living commentary on the word...." The homily, then tries to connect God's Word with the lives of people today, so that they may enter into a deeper relationship with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**We respond.** Our response to God's Word for us now takes at least three forms. (1) We recommit ourselves to living God's Word by renewing our Profession of Faith (or Creed). (2) Having heard with hope the saving promise of God through the readings, we pray for the salvation of all. This Prayer of the Faithful intercedes in one way or another for the needs of the Church, for public authorities and the salvation of the world, for those burdened by any kind of difficulty, for the local community, and for those who have died. (3) We respond to

God's word and wonderful works by celebrating the Eucharist.

We might also respond to God's Word at work in the Church by baptizing new members, marrying a couple, celebrating one of the preparatory rites of Christian initiation, or any one of a number of other liturgical rites. We also respond by the service we render to others day-to-day.

Overall, the Liturgy of the Word leads us to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and both draw us together into fuller communion with Christ.

## THE READINGS AND THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The Sunday scripture readings are set up in a three-year cycle in order to provide richer fare at the table of God's word. In Year A, the gospel of Matthew is read; in Year B, the gospel of Mark; in Year C, the gospel of Luke. The gospel of John is read every year during the Lent and Easter seasons.

We would not have the liturgical seasons of the Church year without the readings from scripture. The close connection of the scripture readings with Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter, and Ordinary Time reveal the meaning of these seasons and the mystery of Christ they celebrate.

The material in this insert is based on paragraphs #29, 55-71 and 137 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. The full text is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at 1-800-235-8722 or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

rjkennedy12/10

# ORDER OF THE MASS:

## *The Liturgy of the Eucharist I*

---

### WHAT IS THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST?

The phrase "Liturgy of the Eucharist" has two uses. It can describe the overall celebration of Mass, with all its parts. Or it can describe the particular section of the Mass that involves the taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of the gifts of bread and wine. It is this second usage that we will be describing in this insert and the next one.

"For Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat, and drink; this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me.' Accordingly, the Church has arranged the entire celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in parts corresponding to precisely these words and actions of Christ:

"1. At the Presentation of the Gifts, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar, the same elements that Christ took into his hands.

"2. In the Eucharistic prayer, thanks is given to God for the whole work of salvation, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ.

"3. Through the fraction and through Communion, the faithful, though they are many, receive from the one bread the Lord's Body and from the one chalice the Lord's Blood in the same way the apostles received them from Christ's own hands."

The components of the Liturgy of the Eucharist are:

#### **Preparation of the Gifts and Altar The Prayer over the Offerings**

#### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

#### **The Communion Rite**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**The Rite of Peace**

**Breaking of Bread or Fraction  
(with "Lamb of God")**

**Communion Procession**

**Prayer After Communion**

In this insert we will consider the first two parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: the preparation of the altar and gifts and the Eucharistic Prayer.

### **THE CHURCH OFFERS THANKS AND PRAISE TO GOD**

Many centuries ago, the Psalmist raised the question: "How can I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?" (Psalm 115:12). The question is ours as well: how do we acknowledge the wonderful gifts of God given to us? We offer simple gifts – the Psalmist offered "the cup of salvation" – that contain a whole world of meaning.

The Christian community takes simple bread and wine, the elements used by Jesus at the Last Supper, as the means of giving thanks and praise to God. Both elements are "fruit of the earth and work of human hands." They represent not just basic food and drink; but more deeply they represent our whole lives. All that our lives are about – our

work, our struggles, our hopes, our joys, our hungers, our satisfactions – are symbolized in these gifts. We are united in our offering, just as many grains make one loaf and many grapes make one cup. When the bread and wine are carried up the aisle to the altar, it is all our lives being carried there. It is our lives, just as they are, in the form of bread and wine, which we place upon the altar as our offering.

The donations of money and gifts for the poor also symbolize the gift of our lives to God. These gifts are given in response to the Word of God to support the mission of Christ through the parish community.

A Prayer over the Offerings is then prayed as a way to express our intention and hopes for these gifts.

Then "the center and summit of the entire celebration begins:" the Eucharistic Prayer. This is the great prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The priest/presider invites the congregation to lift up their hearts to the Lord; "he unites the congregation with himself in the prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit." Through the Eucharistic Prayer the entire congregation of the faithful, with one voice (literally – the voice of the priest), joins itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in offering the sacrifice.

The Eucharistic Prayer sanctifies or consecrates the offerings through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that our gifts of bread and wine (our lives) become the Body and Blood of Christ. It is as though God responds to our praise and gratitude by sharing even more richly and deeply the presence of his love.

There are ten (10) Eucharistic Prayers currently approved for use in the dioceses of the United States: Eucharistic Prayer I or The Roman Canon, Eucharistic Prayer II (basically a third century text of

Hippolytus), Eucharistic Prayer III (a 20th century composition based on the Roman Canon), Eucharistic Prayer IV (a fourth-century text of Saint Basil), two Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation (used in Lent and other appropriate occasions), three Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children, and a Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions (also used for appropriate occasions).

We stand for the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer, known as the Preface. It is highly variable, changing with the particular day, feast, occasion or liturgical season. It states our motives for praising and glorifying God and leads to the acclamation *Holy, Holy, Holy*.

After the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, the Prayer continues to give God thanks and praise as we remember the wonderful works done for us, especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The centerpiece of this prayerful remembrance is the "institution narrative." We remember how "on the night he was betrayed," Jesus took the bread and cup and said "This is my Body, this is my Blood."

In the Prayer too we ask God to send the Holy Spirit on our gifts of bread and wine, and on us who will receive these gifts that they that we may be consecrated to be "one body, one spirit in Christ." We pray as well for the Church, and all the living and dead. And we end the Prayer on another note of praise.

The Great Amen, sung by the congregation, gives consent to all that has been voiced.

The material in this insert is based on paragraphs #72-79 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. The full text is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at 1-800-235-8722 or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

rjkennedy12/10

# ORDER OF MASS:

## *The Liturgy of the Eucharist II*

---

---

### WHAT IS THE COMMUNION RITE?

In the Communion Rite of Mass, we fulfill the command of the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper: "Take and eat, take and drink." We are fed by "the bread of life and the cup of eternal blessing." This simple meal is the gift of Christ's very self: "This is my Body, which is given up for you, the cup of my Blood, shed for you and for all."

The components of the Communion Rite are:

- The Lord's Prayer**
- The Rite of Peace**
- The Fraction ("Lamb of God")**
- The Act of Communion**
- Prayer After Communion**

### WHAT ARE THE CONCLUDING RITES?

The Concluding Rites of the Order of Mass send the congregation forth "to love and serve the Lord" in their daily lives.

The components of the Concluding Rites are:

- [Announcements]**
- Blessing**
- Dismissal**
- Recessional**

### FROM THE TABLE TO THE WORLD

Having remembered in the Eucharistic Prayer the wonderful works of God with praise and thanksgiving, the congregation now prepares for communion with and in Christ. Each in its own way, The Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Peace, and The Fraction put the people in the right frame of mind for the Act of Communion.

In *The Lord's Prayer* we continue our praise of God ("hallowed be Thy name"), but we also make two petitions. We ask for "daily bread," an early description of the eucharistic food, that we might be nourished in spirit. We ask for forgiveness of our trespasses, so that what is holy may be given to people who are holy.

In *The Act of Peace* we ask for peace and unity for the Church and for the whole human family. And we demonstrate our own commitment to be instruments of peace, unity and mutual love through our sharing a greeting of peace with those immediately around us. This act anticipates the unity and reconciliation that are ours in our communion with Christ.

*The Fraction*, or the breaking of bread, is a simple but powerful action. The one loaf is broken into many pieces just as Christ was broken and his blood poured out for the many; and we, though many, become one with Christ by our sharing this one bread and one cup.

During this action of breaking bread and pouring cups, we sing the litany "Lamb of God," humbly expressing our awe and unworthiness for so great a gift as Christ, the Lamb who was slain for our sake.

***The Act of Communion*** then begins. We process to the eucharistic table to "take and eat, take and drink."

Again, it is a very simple ritual action, but it is brimming with meaning. We are presented with the consecrated bread: "The Body of Christ." We respond: "Amen," as if to say "I believe it to be true, and I accept it and all it means." We are not only saying "yes" to the presence of Christ in the host, the Body of Christ; but we are also saying "yes" to the presence of Christ in the Church, the Body of Christ. Further, we are saying "yes" to that fact that we are the Body of Christ in the world as we share this holy meal.

We are then presented with the consecrated wine: "The Blood of Christ." We respond: "Amen." It is our "yes" to the presence of Christ in the cup, but also our "yes" to serving our brothers and sisters in love just as Christ shed his blood in service of humankind.

Our procession to the eucharistic table is accompanied by our singing, another way of uniting ourselves with our brothers and sisters in Christ. For such a gift as we are receiving in this Act of Communion, how can we keep from singing our praise and gratitude?

When the Act of Communion is over, we pray silently for a moment or two, then stand and collect our prayers together in ***The Prayer After Communion***.

We are then ready to take what we have received in this celebration of Mass out into our daily lives and the world in which we live.

Announcements about the works of Christ in the parish and community may be made. The priest/presider blesses the congregation with the sign of the cross that we began with. Then we are sent forth in peace to bring into the world the Word of God that

we have heard and the unity and reconciliation renewed in us by our communion. We are to take Christ from the table to the world. Or better, because we have shared in the Body and Blood of Christ in our communion, we now ARE Christ's presence in the world as we "go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

The material in this insert is based on paragraphs #80-90 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. The full text is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at 1-800-235-8722 or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

rjkennedy12/10