Where Heaven and Earth Meet

Overview of the Mass

Grades K-3
Catechist Lesson One
Lesson Foundations
Where Heaven and Earth Meet

Catechist: To prepare yourself for this lesson, refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Paragraphs 1066 - 1187.

The goal of teaching the Mass is to help our students understand the beauty, the wonder, the awesome prayer that joins us with Jesus, the angels, and the saints in giving glory to God. Each Mass "is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree." Sacrosanctum Concilium 7

The Mass is the prayer of Jesus to God the Father. We are privileged to join in this Heavenly Banquet whose source and goal is God the Father. All prayer, all creation, all actions find their source in the Creator. All of this is returned to Him in thanksgiving in hope of spending eternity with Him in heaven.

The Eucharistic Celebration is the central celebration of the Church's life by which the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is made present. (See CCC 1341 - 1344.)

“Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.” CCC 1104

When we participate at Mass, we come to a moment that most resembles heaven. Mass is a foretaste, a thin veil which separates us from heaven. We join with all the angels and saints when we sing praises to God. We anticipate our place in the eternal Kingdom. (See CCC 1090.)

Each of us ought to come to a place in our spiritual growth where our heart leaps at each word and action that happens at every Liturgy. We want to be in a spiritual place where our week aims toward and receives life from the Mass.

FOCUS:
The prayer of the Mass is the highest form of worship to God. Through participation in the Eucharistic celebration, the Paschal Mystery of Christ is made present.

GOAL:
In this lesson, your students will be given a greater understanding of the parts of the Mass. They will be challenged to be active participants in the Heavenly Banquet.
Prepare

Catechist's Prayer - Lord, You called me to teach these students. I call upon Your help now and rely on Your divine assistance to help me remember whatever is needed to teach them. I want them to know Your love and Your plan for their lives. Please bless each of them in a special way this year. Send Your Holy Spirit into my classroom and help me do the best I can. Send angels to prepare the room, the children, and me. I give You this entire day, and I offer it up for Your honor and glory. I thank You for the opportunity to learn as I teach. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

Call all of your students at least one week before class starts to introduce yourself and to remind them of the classroom dates and location. You will also want to remind them to bring a Bible (if they have one) and a picture of themselves. (See Star Project in the “Welcome” section of this lesson.) Ask them to arrive early so that they can find their classroom.

Preparation - Read through your lesson carefully to become familiar with the lesson content.

Classroom preparation - Arrive 20-30 minutes early. Prepare your prayer center with a cloth in the color of the current liturgical season, candles, and a crucifix or picture of Jesus, along with any other items appropriate to this lesson and/or the current liturgical season. Be ready to greet the students who arrive early.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Provided

◆ supply box
◆ holy cards/other reward
◆ prayer center items
◆ Liturgical Calendar
◆ Priest Paper Doll (See “Liturgical Cycle Review.”)
◆ A Picture Book of the Mass
◆ children’s tithing envelopes (optional)
◆ holy water (See first “Get Up and Move!” box in this lesson.)
◆ poster board and stars for Star Project (See “Welcome” section of this lesson.)
◆ Lesson One Review Cards
◆ Memory Verse

From home

◆ classroom decorations
◆ Bible
◆ additional prayer center items
◆ digital camera (optional)
Thank You!

... for saying “yes” to teaching Family Formation! You will be an instrument of evangelization in the lives of the people you meet this year. Interacting with your students will present many important opportunities for you to bring the love of Christ into their lives in a very hands-on way. The following tips can help you as you prepare and teach:

• Regularly attend Catechist Training sessions. Your participation there will give you the tools you will need to be the best catechist you can be.
• Read through your lesson plans a few times so that you know the material well.
• Contact your students or send each a postcard several days before class.
• Gather your materials a few days before class. Keep them in a special box.
• Begin class on time. Welcome the students enthusiastically.
• Make it clear at the beginning of class what the lesson is about. Repeat the focus several times throughout your time together.
• If you have a personal experience connected to the topic, find a way to weave your story into the lesson.
• Use as many visuals, posters, and props as you can to bring life to the lesson. Children learn using all of their senses. It helps to see, touch, smell, taste, and hear.
• Younger children have a hard time listening to long discourses. Try to keep your presentation short, or break it up in some way.
• Get the students involved in the lesson. Have them act out the story, take part in preparing, do a craft, bring an object to class, etc.
• Teach... avoid preaching.
• Listen.
• Pray.
• Have fun!
Where Heaven and Earth Meet

OVERVIEW OF THE MASS
Catechist Lesson Plan—Lesson 1, Cycle A/B
Kindergarten, First, and Third Grades

1 WELCOME
(10 MINUTES)

♦ Welcome students as they arrive.
♦ Give each a name tag.
♦ Introduce yourself.
♦ Listen to each student recite the memory assignment they were asked to memorize. Give those who know their memory assignment a holy card or other small reward.
♦ STAR PROJECT: Each student should have brought a picture of him or herself. (If not, take a digital photo of each.) Tell them that God created each one of them to be different and special. As each student shares something about him or herself that makes him or her a “star,” glue the picture to a star you have prepared ahead of time, and glue it to a poster board. Bring this to class with you each month, and hang it in the classroom.

2 PRAYER
(5 MINUTES)

Gather the students into a circle near your prayer center. Tell them that this is how we will start our class each month. Tell them that the prayer is to thank God for all of us in this classroom. As their catechist, thank God for each student by name. For example: “Lord, bless Molly.” “Thank You for Johnny’s smiling face.” “Thanks, Jesus, for Jessica!” Invite the students to thank God, and then wait a moment for them to do so. Begin and close with the Sign of the Cross.

Jesus, You are wonderful! You invited each one of us to be here. You chose us to be in this class together. Help us to learn by listening and being polite. Bless us and our families as we begin this year of Family Formation. We pray this prayer in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

3 ATTENDANCE
(5 MINUTES)

♦ Help the students get to know each other better by playing an ice breaker/“get to know you” type of game.
♦ Take attendance once students have all arrived.
LITURGICAL CYCLE REVIEW
(5 MINUTES)

Show the students the current Liturgical Calendar. Locate where we are on the calendar.

- What is the current Church season?
- With what color will the church be decorated?
- What color will the priest be wearing?

Consider the upcoming season and point out any feast days or holy days of obligation.

Dress your Priest Paper Doll for the season, and encourage the students to dress their paper doll at home before they go to Sunday Mass each week.

LESSON
(40 MINUTES)

Today, I am going to tell you about the first Mass and the first Communion ever!

The Mass has its roots in the Old Testament. (See CCC 1323.) Long before Jesus came to Earth, when people asked God to forgive their sins, or to worship, praise, or thank Him, they would offer Him a sacrifice. They would choose either their very best animal, usually a lamb or a calf, or their first crops (like wheat) and kill or burn them. By doing this, they were offering them totally to God and could not take them back. (After all, they were burned!) This reminded the people that everything they had was a gift from God, and they owed Him everything.

God was happy with their sacrifices, but they were not enough to remove the sin of Adam and Eve. God wants us to be with Him forever in heaven. Because God loves us so much, He sent us the Perfect Sacrifice, His Son Jesus, to be offered to Him by dying on the cross.

The night before Jesus died, He got together with His friends to celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus knew He would be leaving His friends soon, but He wanted to be with them always, so He celebrated the first Holy Communion with them. (See CCC 1323.) At the Last Supper, Jesus took some bread, prayed to God His Father, blessed the bread, and then broke it. He gave this first Eucharist to each of His disciples and said: “This is my body, which will be given for you.” Luke 22:19b
Then Jesus took a cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.” Luke 22:20b Then He gave it to the disciples to drink.

Does this sound familiar to you? What I have just told you happens every time we come to Mass. Mass is a very special time when we all come together to celebrate. We are doing this because Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me.” The Last Supper was the first Communion and the first Mass! (See CCC 610.)

**Why do we go to Mass?**

We go to Mass to praise and worship God and to thank Him for everything. We want to join other believers in worship. We go because we want to obey the third commandment which says, “Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.” (See CCC 2182.) When we go to Mass on Sunday, we are obeying God. (See CCC 2168.)

**What are some other ways you can think of to keep Sunday holy?** Have the students call out their ideas, and write them on the board if one is available.

Some ideas might include:
- Read the Scriptures before Mass.
- Dress up in our best clothes to come to Mass.
- Get our homework done by Saturday (so Sunday can be set aside for God).
- Do all of our chores on Saturday so we can rest on Sunday.
- Do our Family Formation lessons.
- Eat a nice meal with our family.
- Visit other family members.
- Refrain from shopping on Sunday.
- Pray.
- Read Bible stories.
- Be especially kind to others.

**GOING TO MASS**

When you come to Mass, you may be welcomed by greeters. They remind us of when we visit the home of a friend and they say “Hi, it is so nice of you to visit.” The greeters make us feel welcome at church, and they make us feel like a member of the family of God.
Holy water is in the baptistery and holy water fonts. When we come to church, we dip our fingertips in the water, and make the Sign of the Cross. Do you know why we do this? (The water is a reminder of our Baptism. See CCC 1668.)

Now we look for a place to sit with our family. Ask the students if they have a special place where they usually sit. Sometimes it is fun to try out a different spot so that we can meet new people. When we get to our seat, we bow or genuflect (if the tabernacle is present) before entering the pew.

Who knows why we genuflect?

We genuflect as a way to be reverent and to show respect to Jesus’ Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. (See CCC 1378.) In the Bible, it says,

“every knee should bend ...
and every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord.” Philippians 2:10b, 11a

After we enter our pew, it is a good idea to kneel for a few minutes to pray. A good prayer would be one like the following: “Hello Jesus. I am so happy to be here. I love You! I want to pay attention at Mass; please help me.”

There are several different parts to the Mass, and each is very important. Because of this, it is important that we pay close attention to them and try to understand what is happening.

NOTE: Use A Picture Book of the Mass to explain each part of the Mass.

**THE BEGINNING**

As Mass begins, the music ministry leads us in a song, and we all stand up. We hear the bells ring. We see the priest, the altar servers, and the deacon and/or lector come up the aisle. This is called the Entrance Procession. It is the beginning of our celebration.

The priest goes to the altar. We make the Sign of the Cross as we begin. This simple prayer reminds us of the core of our Faith. We believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (See CCC 2157.)
The Greeting
The priest greets us with the words used in the Old Testament and the same words that Saint Paul used when he began most of his letters to the new churches: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (or one of the two other options). We reply, “And with your spirit.”

The Penitential Act
The word penitential is a BIG word, and it expresses an important idea. During this part of the Mass, the priest asks us to think of our sins and to tell God that we are sorry for them. We are cleaning up before coming to the banquet! Jesus loves and forgives us of all our sins as long as we are really sorry for them. (See CCC 1496.) To show our sorrow, we pray the “I Confess” prayer (the Confiteor). In this prayer, we ask the others that are at mass to pray for us. We also ask the Blessed Virgin Mary and all of the angels and saints to pray for us. When we pray this prayer, and mean what we say, we receive all the help and grace we need to become saints!

The Gloria
Now, we are so happy because God has forgiven us that we want to thank Him! We sing (or say) the Gloria: “Glory to God in the highest! ... ” This is the song the angels sang the night Jesus was born. We give God glory because He is a Great God! (The Gloria is omitted during Lent and Advent.)

Opening Prayer
The priest prays a prayer asking God to open our hearts to Him. We respond by saying “Amen!”

Do you know what the word “AMEN” means?

It means “so be it.” It means that we believe. (See CCC 2856.)

LITURGY OF THE WORD
There are two major parts to the Mass. The first is called the Liturgy of the Word, and the second is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. During the Liturgy of the Word, we hear the Word of God read to us from the Bible. (See CCC 1100, 1154, 1190, 1349.) We sit down and listen
to the lector read about God's chosen people in the Old Testament. This is very important. We need to listen carefully! Next, we sing or listen to a Psalm, a reading that gives us a prayer to God. (See CCC 2587-88, 2597.) Then, we hear another reading from the New Testament. This one is usually taken from the letters of Saint Paul or the apostles.

The Alleluia
Now we stand and sing the Alleluia. Alleluia is a Hebrew word that means “praise to You, Lord.” (See CCC 2589.) (Now you can tell your friends that you can speak Hebrew!) We sing the Alleluia before the Gospel is read because we are happy that the actual words of Jesus are about to be read to us. NOTE: We do not sing or say the Alleluia during Lent.

The Gospel
The Gospel is read to us by the priest or the deacon. These are the words that Jesus spoke when He was here on Earth. The evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John kept accounts of the life of Jesus and wrote it for us to have forever. (See CCC 125-127.)

Before we hear the Gospel, we all make a little Sign of the Cross on our forehead, our lips, and our hearts. When we make the cross on our forehead, we ask that the Word of God would be in our minds. The cross on our lips asks that the Word of God would be on our lips and in our speech. The cross on our heart asks that the Word of God would soak into our hearts. When we do this, we silently pray, “Your Word, O Lord, be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.”

The Homily
The homily is given to us by the priest or deacon. This is an important time to pay attention, because God speaks to us through these words. The Scriptures are God’s message to us, but sometimes they are hard to understand. During the homily, we can learn how to live holier lives and become better Christians.

What are some ways to behave appropriately during the homily?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Ideas</th>
<th>Not-so-Good Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sit up straight.</td>
<td>Take a nap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the priest or deacon.</td>
<td>Watch other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen carefully.</td>
<td>Draw pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take notes.</td>
<td>Go to the bathroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray for the priest or deacon who is speaking.</td>
<td>(We should go before Mass starts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to our friends or family.</td>
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</tbody>
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God wants us to learn something here. Sometimes it is hard to listen, but it is very important that we do, so that we never miss that opportunity to grow in our Christian life. It is good to talk about the homily with your family on the way home from Mass. This will help you to remember what was said.

The Creed
At the Creed, we stand to say all of the things we believe as Christians. (See CCC 186.) Listen carefully to the words. Think of all the things you believe in as you say them.

Intercessions of the Faithful
In this part of the Mass, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for ourselves and for all who need God’s help. We answer each prayer request by asking: “Lord, hear our prayer.”

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Now it is time for the second part of the Mass. It is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist because we are getting ready for the bread and wine to be turned into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

What does the word “Eucharist” mean?

The word Eucharist comes from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” (See CCC 1328.)

Preparation of the Gifts

Have you ever noticed when members of the parish have brought the gifts forward to the priest? Have you ever done it?

At some churches, families who want to bring up the gifts can do so by writing their name in a book or on a calendar at the back of church. In others, you notify an usher or call the church office ahead of time. How can families volunteer to do this at our church?

What are the gifts that are brought forward?

They are bread, wine, and money. (See CCC 1350-51.) While these are being brought forward, we silently pray to offer our “prayers, works, joys, and sufferings” to God.
Consecration
Soon after we have made this offering to God, the Consecration takes place. The priest takes the bread in his hands and says, “This is my Body ....” He then takes the chalice and says, “This is my Blood ....” We hear the priest say the same words that Jesus said at the Last Supper. (See CCC 1353, 1413.) The bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Jesus, and it is at the Consecration that Jesus truly becomes present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity! Soon, it will be time to go forward to receive Holy Communion.

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest raises the Host and the Chalice. We can pray silently, “My Lord and my God” because the Holy Spirit has changed the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus! (See CCC 1333.)

The priest offers the Body and Blood of Jesus to God the Father in what we call the threefold praise: “Through him, and with him, and in him ....” We believe, and so we sing the Great Amen. Let us all keep our eyes on Jesus at this time, and think about what an awesome gift we have in the Eucharist!

The Lord’s Prayer
Next, we stand and prepare to receive Jesus in Communion by praying the “Our Father.” It is the prayer that Jesus taught us, and we pray it with great reverence because it is a prayer Jesus used when He prayed to His Father. (See CCC 2765.) God is our Father too, and we are His children! In this prayer, we praise God, we ask Him to give us what we need, and we ask for forgiveness for our sins.

Sign of Peace
We give the sign of peace to our Christian friends to show that, together, we are the Body of Christ. We offer forgiveness and peace to those we may have offended. If you have had a quarrel with your brother, sister, mother, or father, go to them and say “Peace be with you,” and mean it with all of your heart.

The Lamb of God
The priest breaks the Bread just like Jesus did at the Last Supper before He shared it with the disciples. He holds it high and says, “Behold the Lamb of
God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” We say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God?

Just as in Old Testament times, when people offered animals, such as lambs, as sacrifices, Jesus was offered as a Perfect Lamb once for all time. He was sacrificed for your sins. (See CCC 613.)

Communion

When we receive Communion, we are receiving Jesus Himself, and it must be done with great love, reverence, and respect! Approach, making a little bow to the King of kings. The priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will hold up the Host and say, “The Body of Christ.” When we answer “Amen,” we are saying, “Yes, I believe, this is Jesus!” By receiving Him, we hope to become more like Him. Look right at the Host as you proclaim this truth.

The ordinary (usual or normal) ministers of the Eucharist are priests and deacons. If necessary, they may commission extraordinary (not ordinary) ministers. These lay people help distribute Eucharist to the people.

How to Receive Communion in the Hand

If you receive in the hand, then imagine you are making a throne with your hands. Place one hand under the other, and raise them both high enough so that the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion can easily see them. After you hear “The Body of Christ,” say “Amen.” Step aside, use your bottom hand to put the Host in your mouth, and make a reverent Sign of the Cross. If the Precious Blood is available, you can then go to receive Jesus in that form too. As the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion proclaims, “The Blood of Christ,” say “Amen,” take the cup in both hands, and lift it to your lips. Take a little sip, carefully give it back to the
minister, step aside and make the Sign of the Cross, and then return to your seat. Kneel down, and talk to Jesus. He is in you now! (See CCC 1355.)

How to Receive Communion on the Tongue
If you receive on the tongue, come to the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion with your hands folded in prayer. After you hear “The Body of Christ,” say “Amen.” Raise your head, and present your tongue as a special plate on which our Lord is placed. Step aside, and make the Sign of the Cross. Proceed with receiving the Blood of Jesus from the cup, if you wish, as described in the previous paragraph.

Communion meditation
There is usually a time of quiet or a song of worship after Communion. This is a time for us to truly be in total union with Jesus. Talk to Him. Listen to Him as He tells you how much He loves you. Adore Him. Jesus is very close to you at this moment. (See CCC 1391.)

Concluding Rite
After the closing prayer, the priest will pray, “The Lord be with you,” and we reply, “And with your spirit.” As the priest prays, “May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” we make the Sign of the Cross and receive the blessing by saying, “Amen.” This blessing will help us to be stronger Christians in all we do during the next week. Once again, it is very important that we really listen and receive God’s blessing as we make the Sign of the Cross.

The priest or deacon concludes by saying, “Go forth, the Mass is ended” (or: “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” or “Go in peace.”) We respond by saying, “Thanks be to God.” We thank God for this wonderful banquet, and we agree to take Jesus to all those we meet. (See CCC 1332.) We want to be good and helpful. We are now energized to do so!
CLOSING PRAYER
(5 MINUTES)

Gather together around your prayer center to thank God for what you have learned today and to ask Him to keep you all safe until you meet again next month. Pray:

Dear Jesus, thank You for all we have learned today about the Mass. Thank You for being with us in the Liturgy of the Word and in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Please help us to always keep Sunday holy and to do our best to “pray” attention at Mass. Help us to tell others about Your love for them. We love You. Amen.

INSTRUCTIONS and CLEAN-UP
(10 MINUTES)

Remind your students to work on their memory assignment for next month. Tell them they will receive a small reward when they memorize and recite it correctly during the next class time. Encourage them to read God’s Word each day. Remind them to keep track on their W.O.G. Logs (if that is a part of your parish program), returning completed logs next month. Give each student a box of envelopes to be used to offer children’s tithes. Encourage them to use one each Sunday.

Please clean up your classroom space. Put your supplies away, and leave your classroom neat and clean. Wait for parents to come to your classroom to pick up their students. No one is to be dismissed until his or her parent arrives.

MATERIALS TO SEND HOME

♦ tithing envelopes

TRAVEL HOME TRIVIA
Students Ask Parents: What was the first Mass ever? (Jesus instituted the Mass at the Last Supper.)

Parents Ask Students: To Whom do we pray during Mass? (God the Father)