



How Does God Want to Be Worshipped?

Part 3

by Joe Sixpack

Let's continue our examination of the proper way to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The first thing here isn't for everybody, but rather those who act as readers at Mass. The problem manifesting itself here is probably not the fault of most readers, as they simply may not know what they're doing is wrong. Some readers may say something like, "The first reading is taken from the book of Isaiah." Are those the words in your missal/missalette? No. The words printed there are the *only* words a reader is authorized to say. Anything else is not in keeping with the order of the liturgy. Maybe that doesn't sound like a big deal, but it really is. We're not there because it's all about us, how we think the liturgy can be improved, or so we can gain a high opinion by other worshippers. We're there to worship God, and He has determined how He wants to be worshipped. Under the old covenant He told the people how He wanted to be worshipped through Moses. Under the new covenant He tells us through His Church, and this is the way His church says it is supposed to be.

Have you ever wondered why only a priest or deacon are allowed to read the Gospel at Mass? That's because they are representing Jesus when they read what He said. So the way we should comport ourselves during the readings and Gospel are much different than the way we typically do it. It's okay to read along with the reader for the readings and responsorial Psalm. In fact, you really should; this may be the only time some people read Scripture. But strictly speaking, when the Gospel is being proclaimed by Jesus in the person of the deacon or priest, our attention is to be focused on Him; not reading along. Yes, I used a capital "H" for Him. The Gospel reading is actually Jesus proclaiming His word, so focus on Him. The GIRM says, "... Christ himself is present in his word in the midst of the faithful."¹

The reason there is a moment of silence after the priest or deacon has finished the homily is for our benefit. In fact, according to the GIRM, "The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation, and so any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided."² It also says, "By silence and singing, the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it..."³ It is at that time when we are supposed to reflect on the key points of the homily and sort of lock them in place in our minds for further meditation later. Of course, this has nothing to do with the rubrics of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where the laity are concerned, but I mention it nonetheless. Why? Well, when people are looking around,

¹ General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), 55

² GIRM, 56

³ GIRM, 55

playing with their kids or whispering to one another, it's pretty apparent they're not reflecting on the truths Jesus just proclaimed.

After the homily comes the Profession of faith. At the words, "...by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man," we are to bow—something terribly abused by omission by far too many people. There's no excuse for this omission, as the rubrics for this are clearly printed in every missal and missalette. Contrary to popular belief, our bow is not a sign of homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Rather, it is our acknowledgement and sign of reverence for the Incarnation—when God became man.

Then comes the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Before I go on, I'd like to make a comment here, even if it may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek.

Studies say 70% of Catholics don't believe in the Holy Eucharist. I believe it too. First, no matter where in the country I've gone, I've seen sacrilege after sacrilege committed against the Holy Eucharist by some laity. At best, there have been numerous acts of disrespect against Him.

Second, it's obvious we really don't believe. Even among believers, we really don't believe. What I mean is, if we really believed fully and completely that the Holy Eucharist is Jesus' body, blood, soul, and divinity—that He is really and truly present—we would fall prostrate on our faces in worship, adoration, and penance. I'm just saying...

Our posture during the Liturgy of the Eucharist is supposed to be one of worshipful and reverent prayer. This means hands clasped together in a posture of prayer—not hands in the pockets, hanging limply at your side, etc. This is our worship of God, a re-presentation of the Son's sacrificial gift to the Father, not simply something you do on Sunday like a walk in the park. It's time some of us started acting like it!

After Jesus is made present on the altar, we recite together the Lord's Prayer. Our physical posture is to recite the Lord's Prayer with our hands folded in an attitude of prayer, just as we do throughout most of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. *We are NOT to recite the Lord's Prayer with arms extended and palms up.* This posture is reserved to the priest alone, as it represents the prayer of the people going through the offering priest to God in heaven. We laity are not priests, and we have no business imitating the actions of a priest in liturgy. These men are special and set aside by God for a reason. Using a priest's posture for the Lord's Prayer is an aberration that crept into the liturgy during the '70s. This is the 21st century and we're all adults—the days of Kumbaya are gone.

Finally (for now, anyway), comes the sign of peace. This is perhaps the most abused part of the Mass. The sign of peace is optional for the priest—he can leave it in or skip it all together. I know a number of priests who omit it because they got tired of the abuses, the disrespect to Jesus on the altar, and their inability to get the laity to do it properly. The sign of peace does not consist of kissing or hugging your neighbor (even your spouse), reaching or walking across the aisle to shake someone else's hand, or waving to a friend six pews away. Jesus is present on the altar, so the situation calls for personal restraint and decorum. You wouldn't behave that way at something as solemn as a funeral, so why would you do it when the Creator of the Universe is there for you? Again, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not about us, but rather about the One being worshipped! According to the Church, when it comes to the sign of peace, "*it is appropriate for each person, in a sober manner, offer the sign of peace **only** to those who are nearest.*"⁴ That means turn to the person on your left and the person on your right, then shake their hand (if you want) and say, "Peace be with you." This is What We Believe...Why We Believe It.

Got questions? Ask them now at JoeSixpackAnswers.com.

⁴ GIRM, 82 (emphasis mine)