

REDISCOVERING THE MASS

(adapted from: **The How-To Book of the Mass by Michael Dubruiel**)

Have you attended Mass your whole life? Lifelong Catholics may have grown so used to the ritual that we sometimes go aimlessly through the motions. Are you a recent convert? Are you overwhelmed by all that is unknown to you that you may fail to recognize Christ in the process?

No matter how long we have been attending Mass, there may be things that still puzzle us or questions we have about the Mass. What do "Amen" and "Alleluia" mean?? Why are certain things done in a particular way? Where do the readings come from? What do the Priests' vestments mean? Why are there different colors used at different times?

Over the next few months, our bulletin will include an explanation of each section of the Mass, following along in our Missal, beginning from the time we arrive at the door of the church until the time that we exit the same door. Hopefully, these bits of information may help to make every experience of the Mass all that it is intended to be by our Lord and His Church. If you miss a Sunday's bulletin just visit our website: and look under "Bulletins." www.stemileparish.com

WELCOME TO ST. EMILE OPEN THE DOORS!

Church doors are often large, heavy and cumbersome to open! Our church may not have huge, fancy doors, but the symbolism of what the door signifies remains! Jesus said, "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9) So here we encounter the first image of Christ – the door! As we pass through this threshold, it is as though we are grasping on to something that our very existence depends upon! I most certainly will not come through those doors in the same way again!!

THE BAPTISMAL FONT

In the center of the space we enter into, is a sacred item: *a baptismal font*. The water is blessed, it is holy. It was blessed at the Easter Vigil and placed in the baptismal font. The water is changed and blessed every month. How appropriate that this water of baptism is the first sacred matter that we encounter as we pass through the doors into the church! At our baptism our parents vowed that we would die to sin and live from Christ. This water is the price of our admission!

WHAT ELSE DO I SEE?

Walking down the center aisle, we approach the *ALTAR*. This is the sacred table where the Eucharist is celebrated. Sometimes an altar may resemble a table, calling to mind the "banquet"; sometimes it resembles a tomb, calling to mind the entombment of our Lord.

At St. Emile, we find the *TABERNACLE* in a small alcove, to the right of the altar. This is a container, shaped in the form of a temple, where the Blessed Sacrament (hosts that have consecrated at a previous Mass) is kept. This is the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. These hosts are available for taking to the sick.

Next to the tabernacle is the *SANCTUARY LAMP*, which is a candle that burns indicating that the tabernacle contains the Blessed Sacrament.

WHEN WAS THE FIRST MASS?

Almost 2000 years ago, on the night before he died, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. (*The Passover meal, is a Jewish ritual meal that, once a year, celebrates God's liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 12:13)*) At the end of the meal, Jesus suddenly departed from the well-known ritual: He took bread into His hands, said a blessing, broke it as his disciples watched. Then Jesus gave the fragments to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." (Mt 26:26)

Jesus then took a cup filled with wine, gave thanks and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new *covenant* of my blood. (Lk 22:20) Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:25) This is the New Covenant that we celebrate each time we come to Mass.

WHY DO WE CALL IT A “MASS??

From the Latin word “*missa*” comes the English word “*dismiss*.” So “Mass” means “*dismissal*.” The celebration takes its name from the sending forth that occurs at the end of every Mass. “Go!” is one of the Lord’s final words to His disciples as He ascends into heaven in the Gospel of Matthew. (Mt.28:19) So, the way every Mass ends with “Go!” is at the heart of what we come to the Mass for – to be empowered by God and sent forth again. Because of the familiarity of the ending, the celebration of our Lord’s Supper eventually became known simply as the “Mass.”

WHAT ARE THE VESTMENTS THAT THE PRIEST WEARS AT MASS?

The word “vestment” comes from the Latin. It simply means clothing. The liturgical vestments worn at Mass have evolved over time. Since the earliest days of the Church, liturgical vestments have been worn by priests for the celebration of the Mass. Thus, the priest, vested for Mass, is a witness to the historical continuity of the Catholic Church with the primitive Church of Rome, founded by the Prince of the Apostles.

Vestments are *sacramental*. That means they are set apart and blessed by the Church to excite good thoughts and to increase devotion in those who see and those who use them. They are the uniform of the priest when he is “on duty,” while he is exercising the functions of his ministry and using the sacred powers which he received at his ordination.

For the celebration of Mass, a priest wears the *alb*, *stole*, and *chasuble*. He may wear a cincture.

THE ALB: The work alb means “white.” The alb is a long, white liturgical vestment with long sleeves. It covers the priest’s street clothes.

THE STOLE: The stole is a long cloth, about four inches wide and of the same color as the chasuble, that is worn around the neck like a scarf. The priest wears the stole as a sign that he is occupied with an official priestly duty; much like a mayor’s ornamental chain around the neck.

THE CHASUBLE: The chasuble is a full garment, shaped like an oval, that is put on over all the other vestments for Liturgical services.

THE CINCTURE: (*optional*) The cincture is the long, thick cord with tassels at the ends, which secures the alb around the waist.

WHY ARE DIFFERENT COLOURS USED?

The different colours are drawn from creation to remind those participating in a liturgy of the different blessings of God. Liturgical colors are used on the sacred vestments the priest wears, but they also can be used on banners, altar, the ambo, and sometimes the veil over the chalice. At the present time, the most commonly found colors used by much of the Roman Catholic Church, are *white* (or gold), *purple* (or violet), *green*, and *red*.

- **White:** White (or gold), since it is a festive, joyful colour, is used during the *Christmas* and *Easter seasons*, and on major feast days. Because white symbolises the Resurrection, it is also the colour often used for *funerals*.
- **Purple:** Purple (or violet) symbolises repentance and penance. Vestments of purple or violet are used during the seasons of Advent and Lent.
- **GREEN:** Green is a sign of life in nature and as such it represents growth, life and hope. Green is the colour worn most often during liturgies in Ordinary Time.
- **Red:** Red symbolises both blood and fire. It is the colour that is used on *Passion (Palm) Sunday*, *Pentecost Sunday*, and for celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF THE MASS?

The Mass has two main parts: (1) *The Liturgy of the Word* and the (2) *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. It is common today to hear the Mass referred to as “the *liturgy*”. *Liturgy* can refer to any public act that the Church celebrates. One of the ancient names for the Mass is the Divine Liturgy, literally “God’s public service”.

In the Liturgy of the Word, we listen to readings from the Bible that tell us of the wonders God has done.

1) The Liturgy of the Word (The major parts of the first half of the Mass)

- The confession where we state the “I Confess”.
- Asking for mercy, Lord have Mercy, Christ have Mercy...
- The Gloria – Celebrating Gospel Readings – from the Bible, a reading from the Old Testament, then Psalms and then the New Testament (Non-Gospel), sometimes in the year Acts or Revelations become the first reading.
- The Gospel Reading (Book of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) – The Gospel can be read only by a Priest or Deacon.
- Homily
- Nicene Creed – Profession of Faith
- Universal Prayer

2) The Liturgy of the Eucharist (the second part of the Mass): In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we celebrate the passion and death of our Lord in the way He instructed His disciples to do so. There is a definite change in direction at this point. Major parts of the second half:

- The Collection (Offerings): The bread and wine brought to the altar as well as our financial gifts to the church
- The preparation of the gifts by the Priest (Bread and Wine)
- The Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)
- The Consecration (Priest repeats the words of the last supper and the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ)
- The Congregation proclaims the Mystery of Faith – Jesus’ dying, rising and coming again.
- The Lord’s Prayer
- Sign of Peace – it is the sign of forgiveness and unity among all celebrating the mass. Everyone is equal in the presence of Jesus.
- “Lamb of God”
- Distribution of the Eucharist
- Final blessing

THE MASS BEGINS....

The Mass is a communal prayer, so we now join with the others who have gathered as the Body of Christ, to sing *THE OPENING HYMN* together. We give evidence of our love for God by raising our voices in song!

MEANWHILE.....

A procession towards the altar begins with a *Lector* (reader), carrying the Book of Readings high, a *cross bearer*, holding aloft our Lord’s image on a cross, *servers* (persons who assist the celebrant of the Mass) holding candles, and lastly, the priest. We may think that the Mass is something that only the priest celebrates and we simply observe. However: “It is the *whole* community, the body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates.” (CCC # 1140)

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS and “HELLO”

The priest and the entire congregation make the *sign of the cross*. This reminds us of our Saviour and how He died for us on the wood of the cross. We are no longer alone; God is with us and so are our fellow believers.

Next, the priest uses the same words that Saint Paul the Apostle used in his letters to the various churches: “*The Lord be with you!*” This was a standard greeting in Jesus’ day, much like “Good

morning!" or "Hi!" Our reply is: "And with your spirit." When we return the greeting we are saying that we wish that the celebrant feel this "grace" and "peace" to the core of his being!

PREPARATION/ THE PENITENTIAL RITE

The Priest begins with: "Brothers & sister, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries." (*a sin is anything that breaks my relationship with God.*) A period of silence follows, allowing time to think and reflect. We then begin: "I confess to almighty God....." We call upon the Blessed Virgin, all the angels & saints, and our brothers & sisters, to pray to God for us. At the end of this prayer, the priest prays a *prayer of absolution* as we accept the mercy of God.

LORD HAVE MERCY (KYRIE)

"Kyrie" is the Greek word for "Lord". Here, we are acknowledging that Jesus is God and ask Him for forgiveness of our sins. Repeating this three times is asking for mercy from the Father, then the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

GLORY TO GOD (*omitted during Advent & Lent*)

Confident that the Lord will forgive us our sins, we now sing, giving praise to God. This prayer of the Mass is an ancient hymn with three parts. The *first* is the song that the shepherds heard sung by the choir of angels at the birth of Christ. The *second* part praises God by recalling all of His attributes. The *third* part prays to Jesus, asking Him to save us from our sins.

But what does "Glory" to God mean?? One meaning is in reference to the very *Presence of God Himself*. The other is an example of "glory" referring to *praise*. As we raise our minds & hearts to God in this hymn of praise, we should recognize God's Presence in our midst.

LET US PRAY

The priest now asks us to pray, which means, "Let us ask". Asking God is an act of faith. It is an act of faith that God is *listening* to us—that He is present. Second, it is an act of faith that He is able to *fulfill* our request. Third, it is an act of faith that He wished to *answer* our pleas.

THE COLLECT

The Latin name for this prayer is "Collecta", meaning that we "gather" ("collect") all of the prayers that we have offered and formally present them before God the Father.

SAYING "AMEN"

At the end of the Collect, we reply "Amen!" This is a response we give often throughout the liturgy and it is an important part of our participation in the Mass. AMEN means: "So be it", or "truly." It is our way of saying that we agree with the prayer said by the priest, and that it is our prayer too.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD (Readings)

We now arrive at the part of the Mass called the *Liturgy of the Word*. The reader stands at the *ambo* (stand or lectern) and reads from the *Lectionary*. (a book that contains the Bible Readings used at Mass)

The **FIRST READING** is always from the *Old *Testament* (*except during the Easter Season. See below). It is chosen because it somehow relates to the Gospel of the day. Every Sunday's first Reading and Gospel have some connection. The reader signals the end of the reading by telling us that what we have been listening to the "Word of the Lord." Our response is taken from the Bible itself: "Thanks be to God."

*"TESTAMENT" is another name for "covenant." It was Jesus who coined the term "New Covenant."

*EASTER SEASON: *Beginning with Easter Sunday, the First Reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles (not from the Old Testament) This continues until the end of the Easter Season on Pentecost*

Sunday. During this Easter Season the proclamation of Acts allows us to focus on what life for Jesus' disciples was like in the early Church.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM and RESPONSE

The *Book of Psalms* is found in the Bible. It is a collection of inspired poems, hymns, and prayers. Traditionally, the Psalms were attributed to King David, but there are many authors. "Psalms" comes from the Greek & Hebrew words meaning "a song accompanied by music." They were used in the time of Jesus in the temple and the synagogues. Jesus quotes from the Book of Psalms more than from any other book of Scripture! The practice of singing a response to the Psalm dates back to the early Church.

SECOND READING

This reading is *always* from the New Testament ("covenant"). The Readings of the New Testament deal with the coming of Jesus and the establishment of God's New Covenant with humanity through Jesus, God's Son. The Second Reading is usually from the *same Letter* or from the *Book of Revelation* for several Sundays in a row. It is not in concert with the Gospel Reading each Sunday, (like the First Reading) but *is a continuation of the previous Sunday's Reading.*

The Second Reading is always taken from *letters* originally written to different local churches in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. These letters were addressed to particular people and were answering question or concerns.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION ALLELUIA

"ALLELUIA" means "Praise the Lord!" We now reach the *high point* in the first part of the Mass (the Liturgy of the Word). Everything that has come before this point in the Mass is preparation for us to listen to Jesus speaking to us in the Gospel. As we stand and sing the Alleluia (except during the Lenten season) the Gospel may be held aloft.

"Gospel" means "good news". The priest first says a prayer asking God to "be in my heart and on my lips, that I may worthily proclaim the Gospel." He then makes the sign of the cross over the Gospel Reading and then on his *forehead, lips, and heart.* We all do the same.

Why do we do this? What does it mean "Listening to the "good news" is not easy when so many other messages and thoughts are vying for our attention! Therefore, "for the word which Christ brought and which is set down in this book, we are willing to stand with a *mind* that is open; we are ready to confess it with our *mouth*; and above all, we are determined to safeguard it faithfully in our *hearts.*" (Mass of the Roman Rite, p.454)

OUR RESPONSE

At the end of the Gospel proclamation the priest kisses the Book, may hold it aloft and announces to us that what we have heard is the "Gospel of the Lord." We answer: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

HOMILY

A "homily" is an explanation of the Readings we have just heard and an application of what they mean to us today. A great homily is not one that answers all of our questions or is necessarily "entertaining." A great homily is one that challenges us, leaves us yearning for more knowledge. It should whet our appetite for our reception of the Eucharist.

OF FAITH (CREED) ...I BELIEVE....

"CREED" from the Latin word "Credo" means: "I believe". We have heard the Word of God proclaimed and preached. Now, we respond with the words of the Apostle's Creed or the *Nicene Creed.*

The Apostles' Creed is called the Apostles' Creed not because it was produced by the apostles themselves but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings.

The Nicene Creed was written by the bishops at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The Creed is a summary of what Christians believe.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL – UNIVERSAL PRAYER

Prayer is an act of faith. God involves us in the salvation of the world. We address these prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ confident that He will present them to the Father. Our response is usually "Lord, hear our prayer", although other responses may be used.

THE SECOND PART OF THE MASS: THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

EUCHARIST means "*GIVE THANKS*". We now prepare ourselves to offer ourselves, along with the priest, to God the Father in union with the one sacrifice of Christ.

THE COLLECTION:

In the early Church, people would bring the bread and wine from their homes and present it to the presider during the Mass. Today, we still have the opportunity to "give" of ourselves at Mass. One of the most concrete ways that we offer some part of our self is by giving in the offertory collection. Giving in the collection is a symbolic way of proclaiming that our faith is not in our material wealth. We acknowledge that God is the source of all we have; we want to return some of what we have to God for the building of His Kingdom. Of course, it also pays the very real bills that the church accrues..

PROCESSION OF THE GIFTS

Representatives from the congregation are chosen to carry up these gifts. This gift represents us, and the people who bring them to the front emphasize the fact that "we" the congregation are asking the priest to take these gifts and to offer them to God in our name.

PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR

The altar is the center of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. During the collection, the altar is prepared, usually by the altar server. A *corporal*, *purificator*, *Roman Missal*, *paten*, and *chalice* are all placed on the altar. WHAT ARE THEY??

- *Corporal*: a square linen cloth that the chalice and paten rest upon on the altar. (kind of placemat)
- *Purificator*: a linen cloth used to clean the chalice (like a towel)
- *Roman Missal*: a book containing the various prayers said at Mass
- *Paten*: a sacred plate used to hold the bread that will be consecrated
- *Chalice*: A sacred cup used to hold the water and wine that will be consecrated.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (BREAD AND WINE)

Once the priest has been given the gifts of bread and wine, they are taken and placed on the altar. The priest prepares the cup by pouring a drop of water into the wine while saying a prayer. His prayer requests that "we who participate in this Mass may come to share in the divinity of Christ (*symbolized by the wine*) who humbled Himself to share in our humanity." (*symbolized by the drop of water*) The blessing of the bread and wine is actually a kind of Grace. These two blessing prayers have been used at Jewish Sabbath dinners for over 3000 years!

At the conclusion of each, we give our assent by saying: "*Blessed be God forever.*"

HAND WASHING

The priest next quietly says two prayers. The first is a prayer of *contrition*. Bowing, he asks that the Lord “be pleased with the “sacrifice” that is being offered to Him, not out of pride but indeed out of humility and contrition.

The second prayer accompanies the washing of the hands: “Wash me from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Psalm 51:2)

OUR OFFERING

The priest then invites us to join him that God may accept “our sacrifice” both for our benefit and the benefit of the entire Church.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Eucharistic Prayer is the very *heart of the Mass*. There are a number of Eucharist Prayers that can be used by the priest at Mass. They all have a common form so that even if they vary a bit, there are key recognizable parts.

a) THE PREFACE

This great prayer of thanksgiving and consecration, the Eucharistic Prayer, begins with a “preface.” (meaning, “the beginning”). The preface is ancient. The priest begins by invoking the Lord’s Presence upon us and we in return ask the “Lord to be with him”.

Then, “lift up your hearts,” meaning to set aside all of our concerns for the period of this prayer and focus on God intensely.

The prayer continues as the priest gives thanks to God the Father, listing the many works of the Father that we experience in the world He has created, the sending of His Son and the Holy Spirit for our redemption and sanctification.

(b) THE SANCTUS

Sanctus is the Latin word for “*holy*”. More accurately: “three holies” Our response to all of the great things that God has done for us is to sing a passage from Isaiah and the Book of Revelation. These quotes relate to the worship of God in heaven. The last: “Hosanna in the highest...”, relates to the worship of God on earth - Jesus, the son of God entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, where He would celebrate the Last Supper, be crucified, die, and rise again from the dead.

(c) THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER CONTINUES....

This part is a ritual storytelling of what Jesus did “on the night before He died”. We are brought in to the *presence* of the event. The priest recounts what Jesus did and said at the Last Supper. We also invoke the Holy Spirit.

THE CONSECRATION is the moment when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This happens when the priest recites the words of Jesus over them. He takes the bread into his hands, repeats what Jesus did and says what Jesus said: “This is my body which is given for you.” He then takes the cup, says “This cup is the new covenant in my blood....” “Do this in memory of me.” When Jesus told His disciples to “Do this in memory of me” He was speaking of “memory” meaning to make “*present*” the event.

The way that the bread and wine are consecrated separately symbolizes the Lord’s death on the cross. Later in the Mass, the Body and Blood of our Lord are brought together, in the Mingling Rite, so that what we receive is the Risen Lord.

(d) THE MYSTERY OF FAITH: After the consecration, we are invited to proclaim our belief in the Resurrection of the Lord whose death we have just mystically witnessed. We also proclaim our faith that He is alive and will come again.

(e) THE INTERCESSIONS: The Mass is celebrated in union with the *whole* Church. The members of the Church are remembered in prayer; some by name such as the Pope and our bishop, and some more generally.

The EUCHARISTIC PRAYER ends with singing "Praise to God". The priest raise the Body and Blood of Christ, present them to the Father as he says "through him, with him and in him." Jesus is present in the consecrated bread and wine.

THE GREAT "AMEN" The great amen is sung and repeated a number of times in a joyous manner to emphasize that we give our assent to the prayer over and over.

THE COMMUNION RITE: PRAYING AS JESUS TAUGHT US - THE "OUR FATHER"

Jesus instructed his disciples to pray. The Our Father was prayed by the early Christians and continues to be a prayer said by all Christians:

The priest then offers us the *peace of Jesus Christ*. What do we do with it?? We share it with the priest by asking the Lord to give him peace also. We are then invited to share this peace with one another by saying "*Peace be with you*".

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Immediately after the sign of peace is exchanged, the priest begins to break the Eucharistic bread. In the early Church unleavened bread was broken so that everyone might share. In later centuries the Church began using "hosts." The symbolism of breaking of the bread remains as the priest breaks his host which is larger.

LAMB OF GOD

The Eucharistic bread is being broken and we sing the "Lamb of God." The wording for this song is directly from the Bible. "The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

"BY THIS MINGLING"

The priest will break off a small piece of the Eucharistic bread and drop it into the chalice. This is called the co-mingling of the bread and wine. It symbolizes the Resurrection of our Lord. It also symbolizes the unity of the Church. The prayer by the priest asks this action might "bring eternal life" to all who receive this Eucharist.

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD"... The priest raises the Blessed Sacrament and declares how blessed we are who are invited to partake in His supper.

"LORD I AM NOT WORTHY"... (Luke 7:6-7) We acknowledge that we are sinners and unworthy. We approach the Lord with humility.

RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST

Receiving the Eucharist at Mass is a gift of Christ. In order to receive our Lord we must 1.Be in a "state of grace," not conscious of any unconfessed grave sin. 2. That we have observed the one-hour fast from food and drink before receiving Holy Communion.

We bow before the host before receiving. The priest or Eucharistic minister will say: "*The Body of Christ*", to which we reply, "*Amen*".

The time after communion is used to reflect upon the fruits of this Communion and to give thanks to the Lord for having joined Himself to us. If there is a hymn of thanksgiving, we raise our voices joyfully!

CONCLUDING RITES

After Communion, the concluding rites of the Mass bring everything to an end. The priest invites us to pray. The prayer gives thanks to God for what we have received in this Eucharist. We answer this prayer with an "*Amen*", making it our own.

FINAL BLESSING

At the beginning of the Mass, we blessed ourselves. Now we receive a blessing. Blessings are found throughout the Bible and usually occur when someone is taking leave of another. *"..... While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 24:50-51)*

GO IN PEACE

The Lord has come into our lives, and in the same way that the Lord sent out His disciples, He is sending us out, too. As was stated at the very beginning of these inserts into our bulletins, the Mass receives its name from the concluding statement of the priest. "Ite missa est" is a Latin phrase that means, "Go, you are dismissed." We are being sent on a mission. We are being sent in peace. If we have given the Lord all that troubles us when we entered the doors of the church, we will find that we truly do leave with His peace. It is not an empty phrase, for the Lord is truly our only hope for peace in this world.

THE CLOSING PROCESSION

At the end, the priest kisses the altar. While this is happening the congregation sings the final hymn. The ministers of the liturgy now exit in procession.

Finally, as we step through the doors into the outside, we find ourselves back in our world, with all of its difficulties and challenges. Whatever our experiences, we are mindful of Jesus' Presence with us. Just as our Lord walked the streets of Jerusalem, so now He walks with us.

"Go, then, to peoples everywhere and make them my disciples.... And I will be with you always to the end of the age." (Matthew 28)