

# TYPES OF MASSES

- 1- **Low Mass**
- 2- **High Mass**
- 3- **Solemn Mass**
- 4- **Votive Mass** (*Supplication, Thanksgiving, Requiem, Nuptial*)
- 5- **Vigil Mass**
- 6- **Pontifical Mass**
- 7- **Concelebrated Mass**

The Holy Mass may be offered or celebrated only by a bishop or by a priest. He is then referred to as the *celebrant* of the Mass. He represents Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the Church, and presides at the Mass as Jesus did at His Last Supper, when He instituted the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

Both the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist are administered to the faithful by the celebrant during every Mass. Sometimes the Sacrament of the Word of God is offered during the Mass, which may be delivered by a deacon besides a bishop or a priest.

The two basic kinds of Masses are the Low Mass and the High Mass. These two are offered most often at the parish. A High Mass is scheduled for every Sunday, each Holy Day of Obligation and certain major holy days. Low Masses are generally offered during the week and on Saturdays, especially when only a small group of people are expected to attend.

**1 – Low Mass** – a Mass that is entirely read or spoken by the celebrant. No parts of the Mass are chanted or sung, but hymns may be sung by the congregation and by the choir. The celebrant may even lead the singing of the hymns. Sometimes music may be played softly during certain parts of the Mass in order to help create a more uplifting atmosphere.

**2 – High Mass** – a Mass that has some of its parts chanted or sung by the celebrant, which includes some parts that are sung responsorially between the celebrant and the congregation or the choir. Any day there is more than one Mass celebrated, the High Mass should be prominent and celebrated when the most people are expected to attend. At the High Mass music is played and hymns are sung, unless prevented by circumstances.

Another basic kind of Mass is the Solemn Mass. It is offered on high holy days and on special occasions at the parish.

**3 – Solemn Mass** – a Mass that is a High Mass (one in which certain parts are sung by the celebrant) at which there are assistants to the celebrant. An assistant stands at each side of the celebrant throughout the Mass and each one is assigned specific duties. Traditionally during a Solemn Mass the Readings and the Gospel are chanted and incense is used. The altar may be incensed during the Entrance Rite, the Gospel prior to its

proclamation, and the gifts of bread and wine as well as the altar during the Offertory. A Solemn Mass is usually offered to celebrate Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and very special occasions.

Masses that are not offered on behalf of the whole congregation from the beginning to the end have a specific designation in the Church. Such Masses are celebrated for a special purpose by request and are called Votive Masses, of which there are several types.

**4 – Votive Mass or Mass of Special Intention** – a Mass that is offered at the request of an individual or a group for a special purpose. It may be celebrated as a Low, High or Solemn Mass. The four common types of Votive Masses are:

**a- Mass of Supplication or Entreaty** — when a humble petition, earnest request or urgent solicitation is made to God through Christ in the context of the Holy Mass. A common Mass of this type is the Mass for Health, when prayers are offered for the healing of individuals. A Mass of Grace may be offered to ask God to provide a specific kind of help to individuals in accordance with His will and to His greater glory.

**b- Mass of Thanksgiving** — when gratitude is expressed to God or divine goodness is publicly acknowledged or celebrated through Christ in the context of the Holy Mass. Common Masses of this type are offered on: wedding anniversaries, church anniversaries, anniversaries of ordination and civic or national holidays.

**c- Requiem Mass or Mass for the Dead** — when any or all of the faithful who are dead are remembered and prayers are offered in the hope that their souls will pass from this life to eternal life in God's heavenly kingdom through Christ in the context of the Holy Mass. A requiem Mass may be a funeral Mass, one that is offered on the anniversary of a death, at the time when a family or an organization memorializes deceased members, or on All Souls Day.

**d- Nuptial Mass or Wedding Mass** — when a man and a woman are united in the Sacrament of Matrimony in the context of the Holy Mass. (The word *nuptial* is derived from the Latin language, which means *wedding* or *marriage* in the general sense and taken from the literal sense: "to cover, to veil.")

The last three types of Masses that will be explained are the Vigil Mass, Pontifical Mass and concelebrated Mass. The first one is designated by the time of day that it is celebrated, the latter two by who offers or celebrates the Mass.

**5 – Vigil Mass** — a Mass that is offered during the evening or the night before the Sabbath or a major holy day. In the Holy Bible the Jews reckoned that each new day begins at sundown, so that the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, begins at sundown on Friday. For the Christian the Sabbath is Sunday, the first day of the week when Christ resurrected. Therefore, the Christian Sabbath begins on Saturday evening. Today evening is commonly reckoned to begin either at sunset or at the time the evening meal is usually served. At this parish a Vigil Mass is scheduled at 5 p.m. or later. The Vigil Mass may be a Low, High or Solemn Mass.

**6 – Pontifical Mass** — a Mass that is celebrated by a bishop. (The word *pontiff* is derived from the Latin language and is commonly defined as *bishop*, which is a word derived from the Greek word *episkopos*; therefore, *pontifical* and *episcopal* both mean “of or relating to a bishop.”) The bishop, then, celebrates a Pontifical Low Mass, a Pontifical High Mass or a Pontifical Solemn Mass.

**7 – Concelebrated Mass** — On special occasions the Holy Mass may be celebrated by more than one bishop, by more than one priest, or by bishops and priests together. The Mass is then said to be *concelebrated*. The concelebrants speak aloud and together the words of consecration over the bread and wine. Although a Mass may be concelebrated, there is still one who presides by saying or singing most parts of the Mass. The one who presides is usually the highest ranking bishop or priest present at the Mass.