

An Outline of the Mass

The Mass is the action of Jesus Christ, who is present through the actions of the parish community and the priest. What is happening when we celebrate the Mass? We can get an idea by looking at an outline of the ceremony.

The Mass is made up of two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us, and in the Liturgy of the Eucharist we respond to God's word with thanks. ("Eucharist" means 'thanksgiving.") In addition to these two most important parts, there are also Introductory Rites and Concluding Rites that serve as transitions, bringing us from our lives into the liturgy, and then from the liturgy back to our lives.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance (procession and song)
- Sign of the cross
- Greeting
- Act of Penitence
- Lord, have mercy
- Gloria
- Collect (formerly: Opening Prayer)

With these rites, God gathers the people together. The purpose of the Introductory Rites is to ensure that the assembly come together as one, so that we can act as the united Body of Christ as we carry out the Mass. This first part of the Mass also prepares us so we are ready to listen to God's word and then celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The assembly (priest and congregation) are united, for instance, when we join as one in singing the opening hymn. In the Collect, the people pray in silence for a moment, bringing our concerns to God, and then the priest "collects" our individual silent prayers into one common prayer to God, through Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Reading I
- Responsorial Psalm
- Reading II
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith
- General Intercessions

"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."

General Instruction of the Roman Missal n. 55

In the Bible readings, God speaks to his people in love, and Christ is present among us through his word. We make God's word our own by listening attentively and pausing in silence to ponder the readings. We greet Christ who is about to speak to us in the gospel by singing the gospel acclamation. In the homily the priest or deacon helps us to hear what God is saying to us. Reassured by listening to stories of God's faithful love from the Bible, we pray for the world in the intercessions. Our listening in the Liturgy of the Word is a sign of how we try to live: open and receptive to God.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- Preparation of the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Communion Rite



In this part we respond to God's word by doing what Jesus did at the Last Supper: we *take* bread and wine to the altar (Preparation of the Gifts), *give thanks* to God in the Eucharistic Prayer, *break* the bread and *give* the consecrated bread and wine in the Communion Rite.

When some members of the assembly bring the bread and wine to the altar at the Preparation of the Gifts, it is a sign of all of us presenting ourselves, placing our lives on the altar as a gift.

In the Eucharistic Prayer, we give thanks to God the Father with the words of the prayer and our gifts of bread and wine. Christ continues his sacrifice on the cross, giving himself in love to his Father, and we join Christ in offering ourselves to God "through him and with him and in him." God the Father accepts our gifts, and generously returns them to us, transformed by the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ.

By eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ, we become ever more what we were made in baptism: one Body in Christ. We pledge with our "Amen" to be active members of the Body of Christ and to give of ourselves to others as Christ gave himself to us.

CONCLUDING RITES

- announcements, if necessary
- blessing
- dismissal

The concluding rites are brief but powerful. With the blessing and dismissal we are sent on a mission, to "glorify the Lord with our lives." The word "Mass" ("missa" in Latin) comes from this "dismissal" and "mission." We are sent to act out in our everyday lives what we just acted out in the liturgy: listening to God in our daily experiences and giving ourselves in love and service to God and others.