

# **Diocese of Salt Lake City Reflections on the Mass**



**EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL**  
DIOCESE OF SALT LAKE CITY

## **For the Diocesan Stage of The National Eucharistic Revival**

**Prepared by:  
The Office of Worship & The Diocesan Eucharistic Revival Committee  
Diocese of Salt Lake City, 2022**

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 10, 2022

My dear brothers in Christ,

The mission of the National Eucharistic Revival is to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The revival is a movement of Catholics across the United States - healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist - and sent out on mission "for the life of the world."

The Revival is a grassroots call and a challenge for every Catholic across the United States to rekindle the fire of love and devotion for the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. This Eucharistic movement seeks to bring together clergy, religious, laity, apostolates, movements, and parish and diocesan leaders to spur momentum, collaboration, and lasting impact for the renewal of the Catholic Church in the U.S. over the next three years. Each year will have a strategic focus for formation and missionary discipleship.

For Phase One (2022), the Diocesan stage, I am pleased to present a revised publication of the 4-minute talks on the Mass to reflect the importance of the Eucharist and what it means to be a Eucharistic people. The reflections are designed to be read out loud at Mass by a priest, deacon or experienced minister following the Prayer after Communion. Each Reflection, in written form, will be made available on the Diocesan Website and in the Intermountain Catholic along with being presented in the parishes. Please see page 3 of this document, for a suggested timeline. I would ask that after each reflection, an invitation is extended to everyone to participate in the Diocesan Eucharistic Rally, scheduled for July 9, 2023, at the Mountain America Expo Center in Sandy.

Many thanks to Father Christopher Gray, Liaison for the National Eucharistic Revival, and Mrs. Ruth Dillon, Office of Worship for making these reflections possible and as we move forward together, in this united effort, I look forward to sharing additional resources from the Diocese.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Oscar A. Solis".

Most Reverend Oscar A. Solis, D.D.  
Bishop of Salt Lake City

## **SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR FOUR-MINUTE REFLECTIONS ON THE MASS**

### **SEPTEMBER 2022**

- 10 / 11 Reflection 1 – Introduction (24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
24 / 25 Reflection 2 – Preparation for Mass (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)

### **OCTOBER 2022**

- 8 / 9 Reflection 3 – The Introductory Rites, Part I (28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
22 / 23 Reflection 4 – The Introductory Rites, Part II (30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)

### **NOVEMBER 2022**

- 5 / 6 Reflection 5 – The Liturgy of the Word, Part I (32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in OT)  
12 / 13 Reflection 6 – The Liturgy of the Word, Part II (33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in OT)

### **December – Advent/Christmas**

### **JANUARY 2023**

- 21 / 22 Reflection 7 – The Liturgy of the Eucharist, Part I (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in OT)  
28 / 29 Reflection 8 – The Liturgy of the Eucharist, Part II (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT)

### **FEBRUARY 2023**

- 4 / 5 Reflection 9 – The Eucharistic Prayer, Part I (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
11 / 12 Reflection 10 – The Eucharistic Prayer, Part II (7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
18 / 19 Reflection 11 – The Eucharistic Prayer, Part III (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent)

### **MARCH – Lenten Season**

### **APRIL 2023**

- 22 / 23 Reflection 12 – The Communion Rite, Part I (Third Sunday of Easter)  
29 / 30 Reflection 13 – The Communion Rite, Part II (Fourth Sunday of Easter)

### **MAY 2023 – First Communions, Confirmation, Graduations, Ascension, Pentecost**

### **JUNE 2023**

- 3 / 4 Reflection 14 – The Communion Rite, Part III (Most Holy Trinity)  
10 / 11 Reflection 15 – The Concluding Rites (Corpus Christi)

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## REFLECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Eucharist is the Source and Summit of the Christian Life. The reason why we gather together every Sunday is not just for the community or for the spiritual lessons we might learn in the homilies. Those things are good and necessary, but the reason why we are able to gather in the first place is the Eucharist. The Mass is built around and builds up to the moment when we all participate in the Body and Blood of Christ. You may be hearing this for the first time, or maybe you've heard this sentiment so frequently that it doesn't mean much to you anymore. But we must realize - at the heart of the Catholic Church is the Eucharist, because it unites us to God by allowing us to participate in His sacrifice together through the Mass.

We can only truly understand the gift of the Eucharist if we can understand why we gather for Mass. While we celebrate the Eucharistic Revival within the United States, the diocese of Salt Lake City will be presenting a series of brief reflections on the Mass. These 4-minute reflections are meant to be a mini "class on the Mass."

We will walk through the entire Mass over this series of reflections, and we will begin to notice that every single detail of the Mass, even those we may not be familiar with, point to and find their full meaning in the Eucharist. If you have ever wondered to yourself, "why do we do *this* during the Mass? What's the purpose of having *that* during the Mass? Why *can't* we do this for the Mass?" then hopefully these reflections will answer all those questions, all while explaining that every part ultimately leads us to understand and appreciate the Eucharist. We will discover a harmony between the components of Mass and the presence of Christ throughout the history of our faith.

St. Augustine once addressed God by calling Him "Beauty ever ancient, ever new." This description is equally appropriate when describing the Mass. The Mass itself is not new; Christ himself instituted the Mass at the Last Supper and handed it down to us, but we can experience his words and actions at the Last Supper now in the present moment. Because the Mass comes to us directly from Christ, each part of it indicates how we can find him, love him, know him, and share him to the world.

The Eucharist is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ among us and within us; everything about the Mass revolves around it, and Christ gradually reveals His presence more clearly and more deeply to us throughout the Mass until the moment of consecration. We in turn become Christ to others when we receive Him into our hearts and are called to "Go forth."

Through these reflections, you'll learn new things about the Mass. You'll find that the Mass allows us to relive the entirety of Salvation History, from the sacrifice rituals of the Old Testament to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in the book of Revelation.

If you're new to Mass, you might have noticed that we use all of our five basic senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) during the liturgy, which helps us to unite our souls to God through our bodies. This is because Mass is actively lived. Through our bodies and in the Mass, we adore God, we express our remorse for our sins, we thank Him for all He has done, and we ask Him to reveal Himself to us. Eventually, Our time together ultimately leads to the moment when he does reveal Himself fully in the Eucharist. But the process, as we will come to learn through these reflections, is gradual and constant throughout the Mass.

## REFLECTION 2 – PREPARATION FOR MASS

Here's a question for us to ponder: is Mass fun? If not, *should* it be fun? There are a lot of things we do in life and things we spend our time on not because it is fun, but because it is meaningful. Establishing and maintaining relationships with other people is not always fun, but it satisfies our need for community. Working on our health is not always fun, but it allows us to feel better in the long run and to be around for those whom we love. Going to work or school is not always fun, but it lets us work for something greater in our lives. In fact, when it comes to the things that matter in life, whether it is fun or not is one of the least important things we consider before choosing to do them. We do these things for two reasons: it is the right thing to do, and it is good for us. Whether we have realized it or not, there is nothing that matters more in life than the Mass. All those other things that matter to us - our relationships, our health, our jobs - are only possible and only matter because of what happens during the Mass.

If you consider yourself a Catholic but do not consider the Mass as the most meaningful aspect of life, don't worry - it probably isn't your fault. In fact, very few of us probably understand exactly what the Mass is, so it takes some explaining. We are using these brief reflections to walk through the Mass and to understand why we do what we do.

The reason why Mass is the most important part of our lives is because it is where we can have a personal and physical encounter with Jesus Christ himself in the Eucharist. Think of your relationships with those you love - how successful are those relationships going to be if it's a one-way street. How can we expect to foster relationships with others if we give and do not receive, or receive and do not give?

The Mass can be considered as the time we spend with God in our relationship with Him. Calling someone or texting them or thinking about them is great, but we can't expect this to lead to meaningful growth in our relationship with them. We need to spend time in their presence to do that. We can pray to God and think about Him often, but if we do not spend personal time with Him in the Eucharist and in the Mass, our relationship will grow stagnant. The sad part is that God is offering His time and presence to us, but sometimes we either don't accept it or don't appreciate it.

Like all our relationships, you will get out what you put in from the Mass. If you approach Mass with dread because it's not technically "fun," you will resent being in the presence of God. Instead, try to approach Mass in a different way - you're not coming here to have fun, you're coming here to find meaning. Because you are undertaking a significant moment in your relationship with God every time you come to Mass, it requires some preparation.

Preparing for Mass does not begin when we walk into the church; it carries over from our last time attending when we are instructed to “Go forth,” to “Go in peace,” and to “Glorify the Lord by your life.” As the expression of our relationship with God, Mass is an active thing that should be reflected outside of the walls of a church. All the preparation we do before the Mass, from fasting an hour before to genuflecting, blessing ourselves with holy water, and kneeling in prayer, is done because of the Eucharist.

If Mass was merely a community gathering, there would be no need for those things. So, as we continue to learn why we do what we do for Mass, remember - our behavior in Mass is how we are behaving in front of God. And there is nothing more meaningful in our life than being in His presence.



### REFLECTION 3 – THE INTRODUCTORY RITES, PART I

In the person of Jesus Christ, God lowered Himself by becoming human and by giving Himself to us in the Eucharist. In our last reflection, we spoke about how we prepare ourselves for the sacrifice of the Mass. Once we enter the Church, our preparation becomes much more visible - one of the first actions we take is genuflecting towards the tabernacle, where the body of Christ is kept. Genuflecting is the act of bending the knee - by performing this action, we lower ourselves as a sign of humility before God who is truly present. But it also reminds us of our core belief in the Eucharist: that God lowered Himself for us. Finally, after preparing our bodies and our spirits, the Mass begins. The first part, the introductory rites, are a collection of actions and prayers that are small steps for us towards acknowledging the true and physical presence of Christ among us at Mass.

The first noticeable act of Mass is the entrance procession, when the priest, deacon, and servers process towards the altar. Before we undergo the entrance procession, we must understand that the Mass *builds up* to the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist. Before Christ went to his death, he processed into the city of Jerusalem along with his Apostles, willingly and joyfully approaching his coming sacrifice out of love for us.

The entrance procession of Mass reminds us of this event, while at the same time indicating that the priest, who will be acting in the person of Christ in order to present the sacrifice of the Mass, is one of us - a member of our community and a humble servant of the Lord. When the priest and the deacon arrive at the altar, they will venerate it with a kiss. The altar is where Christ's sacrifice is *re-presented* (not "represented") to us, just as the altar was used for the sacrifices to God in the Temple of ancient Judaism. By kissing the altar, the Priest is emulating Christ, who embraced the cross upon which salvation was given to the world.

Like all prayers, the Mass will begin and end with the sign of the cross. It is one of the most distinct Catholic gestures that we all know by heart. It is also one of the oldest traditions of the Catholic faith. The gesture unites the two most fundamental beliefs of our faith which we must always keep in mind in our prayer life - the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the Crucifixion (in the shape of the cross which we sign ourselves with).

Once we have all performed the sign of the cross, the priest will issue a greeting to the community gathered together. It is an address to the congregation that uses the words and the formulas often used by St. Paul in his epistles. When St. Paul was writing to the individual Church communities, he emphasized that despite any distance or time, all

believers and all those gathered in the name of Christ are united spiritually in their faith, but also physically in the Eucharist.

The beginning of Mass is our opportunity to remind ourselves that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, individually different parts which all make up the same mystical body of Christ. Once we receive the Eucharist, we become brothers and sisters in Christ in a more literal sense because we will have the same blood of Christ within us.

## REFLECTION 4 - THE INTRODUCTORY RITES, PART II

After the initial greeting at Mass, we continue through the introductory rites. The second part of the introductory rites is called the penitential rite; in our introduction to this series of reflection that began a few weekends ago, we mentioned that there are ultimately four reasons why we gather together for Mass.

The first and primary reason is adoration. The second, and the one we will cover today, is contrition. The third is thanksgiving, and the fourth is supplication: asking Him to reveal Himself to us. For us to “unlock” the parts of the Mass that lead us to the Eucharist, we must acknowledge, confess, and ask forgiveness for our sins. This is the purpose of the penitential rite.

Think of times when you work extremely hard to make sure your living space or your working space is clean and pristine. The last thing you would want is for someone or something dirty to come and undo all the work you put into it. We should approach Mass in the same way.

God is pure and holy, and the Eucharist is unblemished. We would be harming ourselves and the community by approaching the Eucharist sinfully. This is why we must go to confession for any serious sins we have committed, and why we must ask for forgiveness for our personal sins.

We begin the penitential rite with the Confiteor, which cleanses us of our personal sins. In this part of the Mass, we prepare a spiritual purification for the rest of the Mass that is to follow by confessing that we have been guilty of personal sins against God *and* against the community. This is why we say in the Confiteor these words: “I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters...” At the end of the Confiteor, we call up those souls in Heaven who have undergone their final purification for strength in our earthly purification. We also call upon each other to pray for each other to God.

After the Confiteor, we sing the Kyrie. “Kyrie” is the Greek word for “Lord,” which is who we invoke: “Lord, have mercy.” We repeat the words of the priest or deacon when he says “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.” In the Kyrie, we are not only addressing Jesus Christ by calling him Lord, Christ, Lord. This unusual formula is an address to each individual Person in the Holy Trinity.

The first part, “Lord, have mercy,” is asking the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, to have mercy on us. The second part, “Christ, have mercy,” is asking the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son made man in the person of Jesus Christ, to have mercy on us.

The third part, "Lord, have mercy," is asking the third Person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, to have mercy on us.

We do this in addition to the Confiteor because the Confiteor focuses on asking forgiveness from each other within the Church, which we refer to as the *Mystical* Body of Christ. The Kyrie, on the other hand, takes us a step further, asking God directly through all three persons of the Trinity.

We then collectively glorify God through the Gloria by modeling the words expressed by the Angels at Christ's birth: God has come down to be with us here on earth. This is a moment of celebration, joy, and glory. Once again, we invoke the names of the three persons of the Trinity, further establishing that the fullness of our faith and the fullness of God's presence can be and is experienced throughout the Mass.

We end the penitential rite with a prayer spoken by the priest to God on behalf of the congregation. This prayer consolidates the desires of the congregation and our purpose for coming to God - it "collects" our prayer of petition as a community before we encounter the presence of Christ in a more substantial way in the next part of the Mass.

## REFLECTION 5 - THE LITURGY OF THE WORD, PART I

Imagine you are meeting up with a friend you have not seen for a long time. The two of you have agreed on a time and place to meet and now you are looking forward to their arrival. As you arrive at the agreed upon location at time, you begin to see your friend in the distance approaching you.

At first, they are too far away for you to clearly see them or hear them. As they get closer, you can start to make out the details of their figure and you recognize that it is, in fact, your friend. Eventually, they get close enough to where you can shout at them and they can shout out at you, and you can understand what they are saying. Clearly, this isn't enough. You want to get close enough to where you can look into their eyes, hug them, and spend time with them in close proximity. Still, when we are so excited to see the person, we will make the most of whatever means of communication are available to us at the time. In the Mass, we have come to the agreed upon place and time to meet Christ in the Eucharist, and like our friend, throughout the Mass, Christ approaches us gradually.

We've covered the introductory rite and the penitential rite, in which we can start to recognize the presence of Christ, but when we move into the next part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, Christ's presence becomes that much clearer when we can actually hear him.

The Liturgy of the Word also reminds us that the Mass, from beginning to end, is a re-living of Salvation History in its entirety, from the events of the Old Testament to the events of the Gospels. This is made evident in one way through the active rituals we perform during Mass but is made most evident in the Liturgy of the Word through the readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the New Testament, and the Gospels.

For each individual Mass we go to, the readings have been carefully ordered so that we can clearly see exactly how Christ fulfilled what was written in the Old Testament. When you look at the readings for the day, you should be able to find a theme that is present throughout them all.

After the first and second readings, the lector will say, "The word of the Lord." Our response, "Thanks be to God," acknowledges that these readings are messages from God directed to us, the congregation. It should speak to us just as much as it spoke to the Christians of the past, and it will continue to speak to the Christians who carry on the faith into the future.

God's word is not like our word; it has the power to create and to transform merely by Him speaking. What we find profound in the readings of the day and what we take away from the readings reveal that transformative power being done within us.

The Responsorial Psalm brings us back to the Jewish worship practice of singing psalms continuously throughout their sacrificial rituals. The Catholic Mass is, after all, a continuation of Judaic rituals (from the study of scripture in the Synagogues to the sacrifices performed in the Temple). This further emphasizes that Christ did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it.

The second reading usually comes from the epistles of St. Paul, which were letters addressed to different early Christian communities, or from the Acts of the Apostles about the earliest days of the Christian message being proclaimed. By hearing these letters and their messages again, we are receiving the same words that the very first Christians heard when they gathered for the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Eucharistic feast.

## REFLECTION 6 - THE LITURGY OF THE WORD, PART II

Christ's presence slowly becomes more apparent to us throughout the Mass, and this is quite noticeable within the Liturgy of the Word right before the Gospel. We listened to the first and second readings and we sang the Responsorial Psalm while seated; now, the Gospel acclamation, the Alleluia is sung after the second reading and the congregation all stand.

Clearly, something significant is happening at this moment since we have all collectively changed our body postures from a receptive position to an active position. This is, in fact, a very significant moment of the Mass; we have reached the Gospel, the most important part of the Liturgy of the Word - the magnitude of this moment is explained by our singing of the Alleluia and the elevation of the book of the Gospels.

"Alleluia" is a Hebrew word which means "Praise the Lord God." By singing this acclamation while standing, we are acknowledging that God is becoming present to us in a new way. When the priest or the deacon elevates the Gospel and processes to the ambo (the podium where the readings are proclaimed), he is revealing to us where God is making his presence known - through the Word.

Before we hear the words of the Gospel, the book is signed with the cross, unifying Christ as the Word with the Christ of the Gospels. We then sign ourselves with the cross on our foreheads, our lips, and our hearts, petitioning Christ to open our minds, proclaim Him with our lips, and keep Him in our hearts through the Word.

The Gospel is the most solemn moment in the Liturgy of the Word because this part of the Mass builds up to the moment when Jesus Christ becomes literally present to us in the Word. This is not a recitation nor is it a public reading; through the Gospel proclaimed by the priest or the deacon, Jesus Christ is present *as* the Word, the same Word that created the heavens and the earth and the same Word that is mentioned at the beginning of the Gospel of John. Our last words, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ," emphasize that it is actually Christ who has revealed himself to us and is present among us.

We began these reflections focusing on the words of St. Augustine, who described God and His Church as "beauty ever ancient, ever new." The Liturgy of the Word proves this. It unites the faithful of the past with the faithful of the present.

The Mass we participate in today is essentially the same Mass of the first Christians. However, we may take something out of the readings based on the current situations of the modern age. This is the role of a priest or a deacon during the homily, also called the

sermon: to apply the Word to our lives today. This should also prepare us and instruct us for when we go forth from the Mass after the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

After the homily, we stand again to recite the Creed. The Creed was crafted in the earliest days of the Christian faith. It contains within it the most fundamental beliefs that Christians must hold and professing it together as a community prepares our hearts for the Mystery that is to come in the Eucharist. Because the Eucharist is the most profound expression of our Faith, we can think of the Creed as a key that allows us to gain access to the next part of the Mass: the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

During the Creed, we bow deeply (and on some days kneel) during the moment when the incarnation is mentioned by the words: "And by the Holy Spirit... became Man." Because we are about to witness the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ, we must be intentionally focused on the idea of God becoming man to be more physically present to us. This is, after all, the entire reason for the Mass.



## REFLECTION 7: THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST, PART I

If you had the opportunity to go back to those moments in life when you made mistakes or didn't take advantage of opportunities that presented themselves, would you? Also, when you go back to Scripture and read about all the figures who made grave mistakes in their lives that led to tremendous suffering, do you resent their behavior towards God?

The Mass is a unique opportunity for us to address these two questions: it is without a doubt that humanity has truly behaved poorly towards God, even those who were considered His chosen people. We might have made the same poor choices they made, but instead, God has given us a chance to undo the mistakes of humanity's past by participating in the Mass. This might sound like an exaggeration, but it's true. The entire Mass allows us to relive Salvation History, but this time we get to be present and walk in solidarity with God through the suffering He went through.

Our reliving of Salvation History in the Mass becomes more noticeable in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, especially in two ways: by emulating the sacrifices at the altar within the Temple and by making ourselves present at the Last Supper in which Jesus instituted the Eucharist.

The altar, which is the most evident and central point of every single Catholic church, now becomes the center of liturgical worship. An altar is not simply a table; altars are specifically and exclusively used for sacrifices. The priest venerated the altar with a kiss at the beginning of the Mass because this is where Christ presents his sacrifice for us. Now, those involved in the Mass will carefully set it with the sacramentals that will be used for the sacrifice, including the proper linens, the chalice, the paten (the little dish that contains the host), and the missal.

The gifts of bread and wine are presented to the altar - we call these "gifts" because they are made by human hands, and we are handing them over to God so that He can take our offerings and give them back to us in a much more substantial way. The gifts also call to mind the sacrifice of Abel in Genesis, who gave the best products of his labor to God. God does not keep these gifts for Himself but returns them to us in a radically new way.

The priest begins to offer these human gifts of bread and wine up to the Lord by raising them up. The words of the prayers he uses emphasize that these are gifts made by human hands using the natural world given to us by God.

In the bread and wine, we have harmonized the abilities that God has given to humans with the gifts of the natural world (fruit of the earth and fruit of the vine). And we do so

simply to give back to God. This is a profoundly reciprocal exchange of gifts between us and God.

Because we are offering this gift to God, He will return it to us, but not as merely bread or wine. We acknowledge that it will become the bread of life and our spiritual drink. Then, the priest will also add a bit of water to the chalice of wine.

The wine here signifies Christ's eternal divinity, while the water signifies the humanity that God took on for Himself. By adding water to the wine, this also calls to mind the moment that our Church began - when Christ was pierced at his side on the cross, and blood and water spilled forth. The priest now calls *us* to participate in the sacrifice by saying: "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father." We stand because we are now coming into the moment of participation collectively, while together we respond, imploring that God accept the sacrifice of the Church at the hands of the priest who will be acting in the person of Christ for us.

## REFLECTION 8 - THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST, PART II

When the altar is ready and prepared for the sacrifice of the Mass, the priest has already prepared *himself* to be worthy of offering the Sacrifice. We have collectively asked God to accept our sacrifice for our good and the good of all God's holy Church. Occasionally, the priest will incense the gifts, the cross, and the altar itself (which, again, models the rituals of the Temple priests). The incense evokes the image of the burnt offerings on the Temple that would rise up to God in their smoke for him to accept. Incense also uses the sense of smell, further emphasizing that Christ is present among us through every one of our senses at the Mass. The deacon will then incense the priest because the priest will be offering the sacrifice for us.

The role of a priest is extremely important for the Mass, beyond what we in the congregation see. He must go through an extensive method of preparation in order to be made worthy of offering the Sacrifice. Many of these things are details that we do not see, and this preparation takes place even before Mass begins.

Every part of the priest's participation in the Mass is intentional. Something as simple as vesting, or "getting dressed," for Mass takes on profound theological meaning for a priest. Before the priest vests for Mass, he will wash his hands and even this simple action might be accompanied by a traditional prayer that asks God for the strength to be interiorly clean in mind and heart for what he is about to do on behalf of the church.

The garments that a priest puts on are also very important. The role of a priest is not passive or insignificant; he will be performing the most important act a human person can, and just like the priests of the Temple in the Old Testament, their garments should signify this. God Himself instructed Moses exactly how a priest should be vested for offering sacrifices (you can find this in chapter 28 of Exodus), and we continue to use God's instruction for Mass. Every layer the priest puts on can involve a specific prayer, further indicating that *nothing* involving the Mass is done frivolously.

The priest is not celebrating the Mass by himself; Christ is celebrating the Mass through the priest. Therefore, the garments that a priest wears in a way take the focus away from the human being and bring our focus back to Christ, the one who offers the sacrifice of the Mass.

The final act of preparation a priest undergoes before offering the Sacrifice occurs at the altar. It recalls all the preparation he went through to get to this point by washing his hands at the altar while saying a prayer silently (Psalm 51:2): "Lord, wash away my iniquities, cleanse me from my sins."

The fact that so many of these reverent and intentional acts are done away from the public eye reminds us that the Mass is not being “performed,” nor is it a spectacle for human eyes. It is done for God, and what we do away from the public eye is the purest expression of who we truly are. It also tells us that the Mass is not something that can be done frivolously. The role of a priest is necessary and incredibly special - as humans, we are blessed to have among us men who have accepted this solemn calling. But this does not mean we sit by and watch them from the sidelines; we have prepared the priest as a community in every moment outside of the Mass so that he is ready when his priestly duties are needed for the Mass. He offers this Sacrifice on our behalf.

## REFLECTION 9: THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER, PART I

Every single moment of the Christian life is meant to bring us to an eventual personal encounter with Christ. That means that when Mass begins, we start to take the first steps toward a real encounter with the person of Jesus. Until now in the Mass, we have sensed Christ's presence in subtle ways, even acknowledging his presence through the Word, but now we have reached the moment in which our encounter with him becomes physical, tangible, and complete.

Every moment of our Christian life leads us to *this* specific moment of the Mass. Because this is the most important moment of the Mass and the Source and Summit of the Christian Life, it will require a deep and extensive analysis. So, for this reflection, we will focus on the first part of the Eucharistic prayer.

It begins with a moment of community participation that starts with the repeating call-and-response found throughout the Mass: "The Lord be with you - and with your Spirit." God is truly present here with us. Then, we say: "Lift up your hearts - we lift them up to the Lord." While the priest has his hands extended in the ancient *orans* position praying in the person of Christ, we as a congregation emulate the interior petition that is most often found in artistic depictions of Mary; instead of having her hands outstretched when addressing God, she keeps them close to her heart with her eyes raised to the Heavens, treasuring all these things in her heart (Luke 2:51).

Finally, we say, "Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God - it is right and just." With this final response, the priest speaks to God on our behalf that it is truly right and just, our duty, to give Him thanks because it is due to Him. This prayer is called the Preface, and it proclaims the greatness of God that is found throughout history, the history we have been reliving throughout the Mass, and in our own lives. The Preface ends with the Priest calling upon us to repeat the words uttered by the choirs of Angels in Heaven.

The Sanctus begins with "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts..." Because the Mass is inherently biblical and is based entirely on what can be found in Scripture, we receive these words from both the Old Testament in Isaiah and the New Testament in the book of Revelation. These are the words uttered by the purest beings in the immediate presence of God in Heaven. This is a *big* deal. It reveals to us that at this exact moment in the Mass, and *only* in the Mass, we are receiving a glimpse of Heaven itself.

This glimpse of Heaven is not because of the community or the priest or even the beauty of the church. It is the eventual presentation of the Eucharist. Combined with these words is the salutation that Jesus was greeted with upon entering Jerusalem for the last time

before his death on the cross, further emphasizing that Christ's sacrifice is the Heavenly vision.

The congregation now kneels. We kneel because we are about to experience something monumental. This is not "celebratory" in the way other moments of the Mass are when we stand together. Neither is this moment passive so that we may sit while this is happening. Kneeling indicates that something is going on that requires us to humble ourselves to understand it.

Some of the first words uttered by the Priest when we kneel are called the Epiclesis - invoking the Holy Spirit to come down upon the gifts made by human hands so that they may become the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate these mysteries. The priest extends his hands over the gifts in the same way the Temple priest would extend his hands over the sacrifices that were presented on the altar in ancient Judaism.

## REFLECTION 10 - THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER, PART II

One of the simplest statements we can make about the Mass is that it is basically the community of believers coming together to relive the entirety of Salvation History, from creation to the Resurrection. Finally, we have come to the most significant moment in this reliving, because *this* moment, after the priest has invoked the Holy Spirit to come down upon the gifts of bread and wine, is a reliving of the Last Supper, when the Eucharist was instituted. We are actively participating in the re-presentation of the Last Supper. Just as Christ's Apostles were present, we have chosen to answer Christ's calling and to make ourselves present at this moment. The priest begins this moment of the consecration by stating the context of the Last Supper before reciting the words of Christ given to his Apostles at this moment.

The Priest is not quoting the words of Christ; rather, Christ is speaking to the congregation directly and actively through the priest when he says, "This is my body, which will be given up for you." Within this moment, two life-changing things are taking place. First, the moment of the Last Supper is now united to the moment of the crucifixion when Christ sacrifices himself for us. Just as we have chosen to be present at the Last Supper, we have now also chosen to be present at the foot of the cross, kneeling and accepting that Christ's sacrifice is for us.

Second, because the words of Christ at the Last Supper are deeply united to the moment of his sacrifice, his words at the Last Supper become literal. He took what was once bread and wine and declared that it is *literally* his body, given up for us. This is the moment that the bread and wine are transubstantiated (their substances are changed in the most fundamental way) into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.

This miraculous event is made possible only by simple words because these words are not merely being uttered by a priest; these words are being uttered by Christ through the priest. Still, we may ask ourselves how even Christ's words have the power to change the substance of something today.

We must remember that Jesus Christ is God the Son, the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ is the same Word that created the heavens and the earth at the beginning of time. This Word has the power to create and transform, and it is through this Word that the work of human hands becomes the body and blood of Christ.

The priest then raises the Host and the Chalice in the same way the body of Christ was raised on the cross for all the world to see. This is such a solemn moment because it is the

most important moment of human history being re-presented to us in the present moment.

The priest will then call us to recognize “The Mystery of Faith,” referring to the Paschal Mystery - Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Remember: throughout the Mass, we actively relive the entirety of Salvation History. By declaring the Mystery of our Faith to us, the priest reminds us that this moment of the Mass is us actively living the climax of Salvation History and human history - when God, who became man, opened the door to Salvation for all people.



## REFLECTION 11 - THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER, PART III

The famous ancient Greek philosopher Plato once taught a theory about how humans know what we know. This theory, which he called "*anamnesis*," proposes that human beings have a knowledge about certain things that comes from within us. It is not taught to us, nor does it come from outside of ourselves. But for us to recognize and acknowledge these things that we already know within ourselves, we need to rediscover them in some way.

Christianity builds upon a lot of ideas in Greek philosophy because they make sense in the context of the person of Jesus Christ. Plato's theory of *anamnesis* can now be found in a Christian context within the Mass. "Anamnesis" is the Greek word for "recollection." While we remain kneeling after recognizing the Mystery of Faith, we conclude the consecration with the Anamnesis. It recalls the instructions given to us by Christ before His sacrifice, and it allows us to reflect more deeply on His words to "do this in memory" of Him. This final instruction of the Last Supper is Christ explicitly telling us that our understanding of the Mass already exists within us, and now it takes rediscovering it to fully understand it and to recognize it.

Not only is God now present among us physically in the Eucharist, but all three persons of the Holy Trinity have revealed themselves to us. God the Father, who has accepted our gifts and heard our petitions, has sent God the Holy Spirit to come down upon the gifts of bread and wine we presented. God the Holy Spirit works with God the Son in the Word spoken by the priest acting *in persona christi* (*In the person of Christ*) to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

As we mentioned before, the Mass is a constant reciprocal exchange of offerings and gifts between us and God. By participation in the sacrifice of the Mass, we are actively accepting and appreciating God's gift of His own Son. Now in the Anamnesis, we are giving the body and blood of Christ back to God as a pure and spotless sacrifice. In the ancient Jewish ritual of the Passover meal, each family would offer a sacrificial lamb that was taken to the Temple to be slaughtered and then to be eaten in their home according to the customs. The Anamnesis, which takes place after the consecration while we remain kneeling, calls to mind this Jewish tradition, the most important sacrifice of ancient Judaism. It was required by the Law that the Passover lamb be unblemished and perfect.

Along with this sacrifice in which we present the perfect Victim - Christ, the Lamb of God - we also present to God our desire to model ourselves after Christ. We present to him from the altar our dead, the souls of the servants within our community who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection. Finally, we present ourselves, sinners who are in

need of salvation, that we may accept the calling to act in the ways of the saints who came before us. This recalls the prayers of the faithful we offered after the homily, which we now place on the altar with the sacrifice of the Son.

The Eucharistic Prayer ends with a doxology - a song of praise to God. This song of praise is directed towards the three Persons of the Trinity who have made their presence known in the Mass. While doing this, the priest elevates the host and the chalice slightly, representing the three hours Christ spent on the cross. Our response to the doxology, the greatest Amen, is essentially our acceptance of being participants of the sacrifice. Through this "Amen," we accept our desire to be present at Christ's sacrifice out of appreciation and a desire to share in it.

## REFLECTION 12 - THE COMMUNION RITE, PART I

One of the unique aspects of a Catholic Mass, especially compared to the worship services of other Christian denominations, is the constant shifting between sitting, standing, and kneeling. We sit, then we stand, then we sit again, then, stand again, kneel, stand, and so on. It's tedious just to describe the process, so we all know full well how tedious the process of actually performing these actions can be! But there are two ways we can approach this diversity of posture within the Mass: we either become so used to it that it doesn't bother us, or we can really try to understand *why* we do it.

Our participation through physical movements should indicate what is going on in the Mass. When we sit, we are meant to be receiving something, either the words of Scripture, a liturgical prayer, or even the homily. When we stand, we are no longer in the act of receiving but now in the act of being even more attentive, and we are all doing it together. When we kneel, we are humbling ourselves by lowering ourselves physically, while constantly reminding ourselves of how God lowered Himself to humanity for the sake of our salvation.

After the Amen following the Eucharistic Prayer, the congregation shifts from a kneeling position to a standing position. Now that we have returned to a moment of active attention as a community, we remind ourselves of one of the most important parts of Christ's public ministry. He came to offer us salvation through his sacrifice, but he made sure to make the most of the time he spent living among us. Along the way, he instructed us on how to live a life dedicated to Christ.

The best way to do this and to always do it actively in our lives, is through prayer. The Mass is a single prayer (in fact, it is the most important prayer), but when Christ's followers asked him how to pray, he instructed them in the Lord's Prayer. This prayer contains every component that is necessary when communicating to God, from adoring Him to thanking Him to petitioning Him for our needs. Now, we as a community return to this simple instruction of Christ and recite the prayer together. You may notice that in the context of the Mass while we are focused on the Eucharist we will soon participate in after this prayer, the words, "give us this day our daily bread" take on a completely different and profound meaning than how we might approach them by praying the Lord's prayer at any other time.

After we recite the Lord's Prayer, the priest gives an embolism, a brief petition on behalf of the congregation that leads us to the doxology - "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever." Instead of ending our prayer with a petition ("deliver

us from evil”) which places the focus on our needs, we instead properly end the prayer with praise and glorification of God.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus’ behavior towards his Apostles at the Last Supper is marked by instilling them with courage and peace for the road that lies in front of them. To live a life in Christ is not easy, but Christ offers us strength for the journey. The priest recites Christ’s message of peace to the congregation and instructs us to offer a sign of this fortifying peace to one another. This also recalls the moment at the beginning of the Mass when we confessed our personal sins to the congregation and asked that they pray for us. It also prepares us for the physical unity that we are about to share with those around us in the reception of the Eucharist. Therefore, when we offer the sign of peace, it should be shown simply and respectfully so that it doesn’t distract us away from the Eucharist.

## REFLECTION 13 - THE COMMUNION RITE, PART II

Whenever we reach an important milestone in life, we try to make sure that we mark that date as something special, and regularly celebrate it as a reminder of what that milestone meant for us. We all know our birthdays, certain anniversaries, and maybe even important dates in our Christian life, such as the date of our baptism or when we received first Holy Communion. The point is that these are monumental moments in our lives.

The Church is a person too - she's the bride of Christ, and we as the faithful are blessed to call ourselves part of her body. And just like any person, the Church remembers and recalls her important milestones as well - while we remember these moments once a year as they happen, we also remember them every single time we come to Mass.

At this moment in the Mass, after we offer each other the sign of peace, the priest will begin to break the Host. This symbolizes and recalls the moment when Christ is pierced in the side on the cross after His death. Many Catholics consider this to be the all-important moment when the Church herself was born, because blood and water (the means by which we are baptized and become members of the Church) spilled forth.

This moment of breaking the bread apart, which we call the fraction rite, allows us as members of the Church to partake in the sacrifice together, to share in the divine meal, and to "break bread" in community. It is a solemn celebration of the Church's conception, one of those monumental moments in the life of the Catholic Faith.

The priest will then break a piece of the host and drop it into the Chalice in a moment called the commingling. We should once again remind ourselves that the Mass follows the events of Salvation History so that we can relive it and participate in it. The moment of the commingling allows us to relive the moment of the Resurrection. Christ's body and soul were violently separated at his death on the cross, which we symbolize in the separation of the body and the blood under the appearance of bread and wine. By commingling the two species, the priest symbolically reveals the moment that the body and soul of Christ reunite at the Resurrection. It's a subtle moment that usually goes unnoticed to the congregation, but it is the commingling that symbolically allows us to participate in the Resurrection.

Now, as a congregation, we join together in chanting the Agnus Dei - "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world." These were the words of John the Baptist when he first laid eyes on Christ. John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for Christ; he is the personification of salvation history up to the point of Christ's public ministry and paschal mystery. His words are some of the last we say before we participate in the

culmination of salvation history. Up to this point, we have repeatedly been petitioning God to have mercy on us for our sins so that we may soon experience true and everlasting peace. It also reinforces the idea that Christ's sacrifice was prefigured in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb at Passover in ancient Judaism.

After chanting the Agnus Dei, we return to a kneeling position, reminding ourselves that we are entering an important moment of the Mass that first requires a sense of humility within us. Before, we had knelt when the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ. Now we kneel in preparation for our reception of the Eucharist.

### Reflection 14 - The Communion Rite, Part III

While we kneel and silence falls over the congregation to mark yet another solemn moment of the Mass, the priest presents the Eucharist to us by saying “Behold the Lamb of God... who takes away the sins of the world.” What the priest presents to us in this moment is Christ in the most physical state. We are laying out eyes upon the Lamb of God prefigured in the Old Testament, recognized by John the Baptist in the Gospel, and seen in His full glory in the book of Revelation.

The final words of the priest during the revealing of the Host is the culmination of our entire existence: “Blessed are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb.” By presenting himself to us in the form of the Eucharist, Christ is allowing us to receive him physically, but in such a way that it is celebratory - in the form of a communal meal. The Supper of the Lamb refers to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb seen in the book of Revelation. The Mass, the Eucharist, and our participation in it is *literally* a taste of Heaven.

Our response to this is reciting the words of the centurion who spoke to Christ when he needed his servant to be healed - we simply are not worthy of participating in the Eucharist, but God allows us once we have gone through the proper preparations of our hearts, our souls, and our bodies.

All of this is only made possible through the Word - the Word that created the Universe, the Word that was with God and was God, the Word that healed the centurion’s servant, and the Word that came forth from the mouth of the priest acting *in persona christi* that changed the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now, the community gets to participate in the reception of the Eucharist. This is such a profoundly serious gift that it is important that we are properly disposed and in a state of grace to receive it. The Catholic Church is incredibly open in our liturgical celebration to those who may be curious or new to the faith, but the Eucharist is not our gift to give out. Therefore, the Eucharist should require us to go through a sincere and active process of forgiveness and repentance, internal and external purification, and a true and sincere belief in the Real Presence before we receive it.

To receive Christ's Body, we do so correctly either making a throne with the palms of our hands and then bringing the Host to our mouth or directly on our tongue. Reverence defines this action, regardless of which way it happens. What we receive in our bodies is the mystery of Christ's own Body and Blood, joining us to all the saints and the whole church throughout the ages.

Christ offers himself to us in the Eucharist, but again, the Mass, and the Christian life in general, is an exercise in constant reciprocation - we give to God and God gives to us. The Eucharist does not come to us - it is presented, offered to us, and made available, and we in turn make ourselves available to Christ by approaching the Altar of the Lord to receive it. If we are not able to receive the Eucharist physically, we can still participate in the community's reception by praying to God for a Spiritual Communion.

After the distribution of the Eucharist, the priest continues his sacramental duties by intentionally, reverently, and prayerfully cleaning the vessels used. The Eucharist under the species of the Host should be consumed or placed in the Tabernacle. The Eucharist under the species of the most precious Blood must be consumed in its entirety. Communion ends with the prayer after Communion, in which the priest asks God on behalf of the congregation that the Eucharist works through us and within us as we prepare to go back out into the world.



## Reflection 15 - The Concluding Rites

What would have happened if the Apostles witnessed the Resurrected Christ and instead of waiting to be sent out by him at his Ascension, they immediately went off on their own and began to talk about the Resurrected Christ? Quite clearly, they would have been unprepared (Christ still provided significant instruction after his Resurrection) *and* they would have focused on the spectacle of the Resurrection rather than what it truly meant for us.

Mass is a prayer in which the community participates together. This prayer is not over after you personally have received the Eucharist. You are still part of the community, and you are still actively participating in this prayer, just as the Apostles patiently waited for Christ to send them out when they were ready. Therefore, you must not leave Mass after Communion. We have just received the greatest gift in the world, one that unites us to the divine and that gives us both a glimpse and a taste of Heaven itself. After we receive the Eucharist, we should return to our seats and reflect deeply on this mystery. Christ has chosen, with our consent, to live within us and to work through us to show himself to the world. This should not be taken lightly.

When we have completed the prayer after communion, the priest begins the final blessing with that familiar, vital phrase: "The Lord be with you." Through this phrase, we have constantly been reminded, from the beginning to the end of Mass, that we are in the presence of God. Now, this phrase takes on new meaning: the Lord is with us because we have received Him physically in the Eucharist. The priest gives the final blessing with the sign of the cross, which we bless ourselves with.

The Cross was the means by which we received the Sacrifice. The cross enabled us to participate in the Eucharist. By marking ourselves with it in the name of the Holy Trinity, we keep it as a constant reminder that our salvation came from the same sacrifice we just witnessed in the Mass. This was God sacrificing Himself for us through each Person of the Trinity.

The final words of the Mass is an instruction - "Go forth." Through this instruction, we are placed in the position of the Apostles at Christ's Ascension, when the Angels told them to go out and bring to the world the message given to them by Christ. We are meant to take the Eucharist that now resides within us and to actively live the Mass outside of the walls of the Church.

Through the Eucharist, we are empowered to prepare ourselves even more effectively for the next time we receive it. This is only possible through actively living our faith to the

world around us. We agree to do this by responding “Thanks be to God.” At this moment, we are no longer reliving Salvation History; we are now actively living it and building up the kingdom of God in the world outside.

Once again, the priest kisses the altar upon which our salvation is presented through the sacrifice of Christ. Departing, he now models the Apostles and the disciples by leading us out to the world, to spread the Gospel, and to live the Eucharist.