

Catholic Mass Trivia Night Study Guide

Preparing for Catholic Mass Trivia Night: November 13, 2026

Purpose of This Study Guide

This guide will help families, students, teachers, catechists, and trivia teams learn more about the Catholic Mass. All questions for Catholic Mass Trivia Night on November 13, 2026, will be developed from information presented in this guide, although not every fact or term will appear during the event.

The guide is also intended to deepen understanding and participation in the Mass, whether or not you attend trivia night. Correct Catholic and liturgical terminology is used throughout, with explanations for unfamiliar terms. Use the guide in the way that works best for your family, classroom, or group.

Contents

Purpose of This Study Guide.....	1
Mass at a Glance.....	2
1. The Names and Meaning of the Mass.....	2
2. A Brief History of the Mass and Important Mass Words	4
3. The Church Building and Its Furnishings	6
4. Sacred Vessels, Liturgical Books, Linens, and Other Objects	9
5. Ministers at Mass.....	12
6. Vestments and Liturgical Colors.....	14
7. Gestures, Postures, Silence, and Responses.....	15
8. The Complete Order of the Mass	17
9. The Liturgy of the Word and the Lectionary.....	18
10. The Creed: What Catholics Profess	19
11. The Liturgy of the Eucharist.....	22
12. The Communion Rite and Concluding Rites	23
13. The Liturgical Year and Calendar	25

Mass at a Glance

The Mass is the Church's central act of worship, and the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. In the Mass, Christ gathers his people, speaks to them through Sacred Scripture, makes his one sacrifice sacramentally present, gives himself to them in Holy Communion, and sends them forth to live as his disciples.

A Four-Part Outline of the Mass

1. **Introductory Rites:** The faithful gather as one worshiping community and prepare to listen to God's Word and celebrate the Eucharist worthily.
2. **Liturgy of the Word:** God speaks to his people through Sacred Scripture; the people respond in faith.
3. **Liturgy of the Eucharist:** Bread and wine are presented, the Church gives thanks, and Christ's one sacrifice is made sacramentally present. This does not mean that Christ is sacrificed again; his once-for-all sacrifice on the Cross becomes present to the Church. The faithful then receive his Body and Blood in Holy Communion when properly disposed.
4. **Concluding Rites:** The assembly is blessed and sent forth to glorify God by the way its members live.

The Two Principal Parts

The two principal parts of the Mass are the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. They are closely joined and form one act of worship. At the table of God's Word, the Church is nourished by Sacred Scripture. At the table of the Body of Christ, the Church receives Christ himself in the Eucharist.

Our Participation

Our participation in the Mass is both interior and exterior; it involves our hearts, minds, voices, and bodies. We listen attentively, join in the spoken and sung responses, observe the proper postures and gestures, and pray during times of sacred silence. Catholics who are properly disposed may receive Holy Communion. At the dismissal, we are sent forth to live what we have celebrated through lives of faith, charity, and service.

This overview introduces ideas that are explained more fully throughout the study guide.

1. The Names and Meaning of the Mass

The Eucharist has several traditional names. Each name teaches us something about this inexhaustible mystery.

- **Holy Mass:** The word *Mass* is connected with the Latin dismissal, *Ite, missa est*. The celebration concludes with a sending forth, or mission, so that the faithful may do God's will in daily life.

- **Eucharist:** This word comes from Greek and means “thanksgiving.” In the Eucharist, the Church gives thanks and praise to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.
- **Lord’s Supper:** Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper on the night before he died. The Mass is not simply a reenactment of that meal; it is the sacramental memorial of Christ’s saving sacrifice and it anticipates the heavenly banquet.
- **Breaking of the Bread:** Jesus used this action at the Last Supper, and the first Christians used the expression for their Eucharistic gatherings. All who share in the one Bread, Christ, are drawn into communion with him and with one another.
- **Eucharistic Assembly:** The Eucharist is celebrated in the gathering of the faithful, which visibly expresses the Church.
- **Memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection:** In the liturgy, memorial means more than thinking about a past event. Christ’s saving Paschal Mystery is proclaimed and sacramentally made present.
- **Holy Sacrifice:** The Eucharist makes present the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and includes the offering of the Church. Christ is not sacrificed again; his once-for-all sacrifice is made present sacramentally.
- **Holy and Divine Liturgy:** The Eucharist is the center and most intense expression of the Church’s worship. The liturgy is the work of Christ and his Body, the Church, rather than a private devotion or a performance.
- **Most Blessed Sacrament:** The Eucharist is called the Sacrament of sacraments. This name is also used for the consecrated Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle.
- **Holy Communion:** By receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, the faithful are united with Christ and, in him, with the members of his Body, the Church.

How Is Christ Present at Mass?

Christ is truly present at Mass in several ways: in the assembly gathered in his name; in the person of the priest celebrant; in his Word when Sacred Scripture is proclaimed; and, above all, substantially and continuously under the appearances of consecrated bread and wine. These consecrated appearances are called the **Eucharistic species**. These ways of being present are real, but they are not identical. Christ’s presence in the Eucharistic species is unique because the whole Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, is truly, really, and substantially present.

Purpose of the Mass

In the Mass, the Church worships and adores God, gives thanks, asks forgiveness, offers prayers for the needs of the Church and the world, listens to God’s Word, joins in Christ’s self-offering, and receives Holy Communion. The Church’s worship is offered to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Our participation is both interior and exterior: we listen attentively, respond and sing, observe the proper postures and gestures, pray in sacred silence, and receive Holy Communion when properly disposed. We are then sent to live what we have celebrated.

Ordinary and Proper

The **Ordinary of the Mass** includes texts that remain the same or recur regularly, such as the Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, and Lamb of God. The **Proper of the Mass** includes texts assigned to a particular day or celebration, such as the readings, Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, Preface, Communion Antiphon, and Prayer after Communion. In this use, *ordinary* means customary or regularly recurring; it does not mean unimportant. The word *Ordinary* can have other meanings in Church usage, but here it refers to recurring parts of the Mass.

The Eucharist is called the source and summit of the Christian life because it contains Christ himself, the whole spiritual good of the Church. The Church's sacraments, ministries, and works are united with the Eucharist and directed toward it.

2. A Brief History of the Mass and Important Mass Words

The Mass comes to us from Christ through the Apostolic Church. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and wine, gave thanks, identified them as his Body and Blood, and commanded his Apostles, "Do this in memory of me." After the Resurrection, Christians gathered on the first day of the week for the teaching of the Apostles, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. The celebration has developed over the centuries, but its fundamental pattern of Word and Eucharist remains.

From the Apostles to the Early Church

The earliest Christians inherited forms of prayer familiar from Jewish worship, including Scripture, psalms, blessings, intercession, and thanksgiving. The Eucharist, however, is distinctly Christian because it celebrates Christ's Paschal Mystery and fulfills his command at the Last Supper. Around A.D. 155, Saint Justin Martyr described a Sunday gathering with readings from the prophets and Apostles, instruction by the presider, common prayers, the presentation of bread and wine mixed with water, a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving, the people's "Amen," Holy Communion, and care for those in need. His account shows that the basic pattern of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist was already recognizable.

Growth of the Roman Rite

As Christianity spread, different liturgical traditions developed in various regions. In Rome, Latin gradually became the customary liturgical language in place of Greek. Over time, prayers, chants, Scripture readings, calendars, and directions for the celebration were collected in liturgical books. The Roman Canon, now also called Eucharistic Prayer I, preserves an ancient form of the Church's Eucharistic prayer. By the Middle Ages, the texts needed by the priest for Mass were increasingly gathered into a single book called a Missal.

In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent defended Catholic teaching about the Eucharist and sacrifice of the Mass. The Roman Missal issued after the Council promoted greater uniformity in the Roman Rite. In the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council called for the faithful's full, conscious, and active participation, a richer selection of Scripture, careful restoration of certain elements, and a wider use of vernacular languages, meaning the languages spoken by the people. The Roman Rite therefore shows both continuity and development: its essential structure comes from the Apostolic tradition, while language, readings, music, and ceremonial expression have developed under the Church's authority.

How the Four Main Divisions Developed

- **Introductory Rites:** The Entrance, greeting, Penitential Act, Kyrie, Gloria when prescribed, and Collect gather the faithful and prepare them to listen to God's Word and celebrate the Eucharist worthily. These rites took shape gradually in the Roman tradition.
- **Liturgy of the Word:** Scripture, psalms, preaching, and common prayer have roots in the worship of Israel. In the Mass, they become a Christian proclamation centered on Christ. The Gospel receives special honor because Christ speaks to his people when it is proclaimed in the liturgy.
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist:** Its basic movement follows Christ's actions at the Last Supper: he took bread and wine, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave them to his disciples. These actions correspond to the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, the Fraction, and Holy Communion.
- **Concluding Rites:** The blessing and dismissal send the faithful forth to live the Gospel. The name *Mass* is connected with this dismissal and sending.

Important Mass Words: Meaning and Use

The pronunciation guides below are simple approximations intended to help readers say unfamiliar terms aloud; slight variations may be heard.

Kyrie eleison (pronounced **KEER-ee-ay eh-LAY-ee-son**): Greek for "Lord, have mercy." This ancient acclamation is addressed to Christ. It ordinarily follows the Penitential Act unless it is already included in one of its forms.

Gloria: Latin for "glory." This ancient hymn begins with the angels' song at Christ's birth and praises the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is sung or said on Sundays outside Advent and Lent and on solemnities and feasts when prescribed.

Collect (pronounced **KOL-ekt**, with the emphasis on the first syllable): The prayer that concludes the Introductory Rites. After the priest invites the people to pray, a brief silence allows them to become aware of God's presence and offer their intentions. The priest then "collects" these prayers in the prayer of the Church.

Alleluia: A Hebrew expression meaning “Praise the Lord.” The assembly sings this joyful acclamation to welcome the Lord who is about to speak in the Gospel. It is omitted during Lent and replaced by another acclamation.

Sanctus (pronounced **SANK-toos**): Latin for “Holy.” The acclamation combines the song of the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision with words proclaimed at Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. In singing “Holy, Holy, Holy,” the earthly assembly joins the worship of heaven at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Epiclesis (pronounced **eh-PIK-luh-sis**): From a Greek word meaning “invocation” or “calling upon.” In the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ and upon the faithful so that they may be united as one body in Christ.

Anamnesis (pronounced **an-am-NEE-sis**): Greek for “memorial” or “remembrance.” This means more than mentally recalling a past event. Following Christ’s command, the Church remembers his saving Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension in the Eucharistic Prayer; his one Paschal sacrifice is sacramentally made present.

Doxology (pronounced **dok-SOL-uh-jee**): A short prayer of praise giving glory to God. The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the final doxology, in which all glory and honor are offered to the Father, through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The people respond with the Great Amen.

Agnus Dei (pronounced **AHN-yoos DAY-ee**): Latin for “Lamb of God.” This title identifies Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. The litany is sung or said during the Fraction, when the consecrated Bread is broken in preparation for Holy Communion.

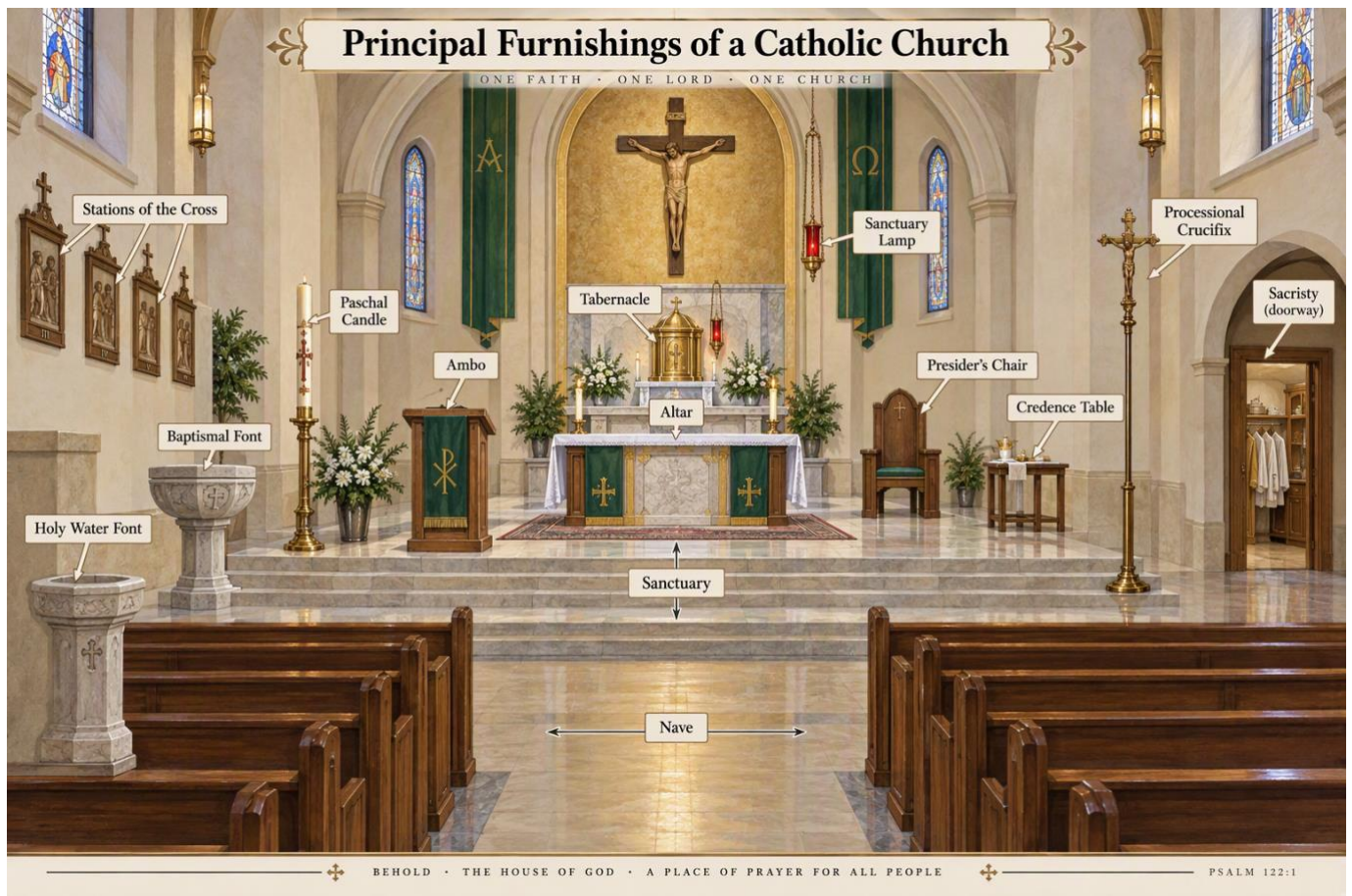
3. The Church Building and Its Furnishings

A Catholic church is a sacred place set apart for divine worship. Its arrangement should help the faithful gather as one body, hear the Word of God, celebrate the Eucharist, and take part fully in the liturgy. Church buildings differ in age, size, and design, but the following terms are commonly used in the Roman Rite.

Main Areas

The pronunciation guides below are simple approximations; slight variations may be heard.

- **Narthex** (pronounced **NAR-theks**) or **vestibule**: The entrance or gathering area between the outside doors and the main worship space.
- **Nave** (pronounced **nayv**): The principal area occupied by the assembly. The word comes from the Latin word for ship, an ancient image of the Church journeying through the world.



- **Sanctuary:** The area where the altar stands, where the Word of God is proclaimed, and where the priest, deacon, and other ministers exercise their roles. It is suitably marked off from the nave by elevation or by a distinct design and furnishing.
- **Sacristy** (pronounced **SAK-ri-stee**): The room where ministers prepare for the liturgy and where vestments, vessels, books, and other liturgical items are stored and prepared.
- **Baptistery:** The area containing the baptismal font. Its design and location should express that Baptism is the doorway to the sacramental life and entrance into the Church.
- **Ambulatory** (pronounced **AM-byuh-luh-tor-ee**): A passage that allows people to move around part of a church, especially in larger or traditionally designed buildings. Not every church has one.
- **Choir loft or music area:** The place assigned for musicians, who serve the prayer of the whole assembly.

Principal Furnishings

- **Altar:** The center of the church's thanksgiving in the Eucharist and the place on which Christ's sacrifice is made sacramentally present. It is both the altar of sacrifice and the table of the Lord. Because the altar signifies Christ, it is treated with special reverence. A fixed altar is dedicated; a movable altar is dedicated or blessed.

- **Ambo** (pronounced **AM-boh**): The dignified place from which the readings are proclaimed. The Responsorial Psalm and Easter Proclamation may also be proclaimed there; the homily and intentions of the Universal Prayer may be given there. Its dignity reflects the importance of the Word of God, so it is not ordinarily used for announcements or commentary.
- **Chair for the priest celebrant**: The chair expresses the priest's office of presiding over the assembly and directing its prayer. It should not resemble a throne.
- **Tabernacle** (pronounced **TAB-er-nak-ul**): The secure, immovable, and noble place in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved. Reservation makes Holy Communion available especially for the sick and also provides a place for Eucharistic adoration.
- **Sanctuary lamp**: A special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, burns near the tabernacle to indicate and honor the presence of Christ in the reserved Blessed Sacrament.
- **Credence table**: A side table holding vessels, water, linens, and other items needed for Mass.
- **Baptismal font**: The basin or pool used for Baptism.
- **Confessional or reconciliation room**: The place for celebrating the Sacrament of Penance.
- **Stations of the Cross**: Fourteen images or crosses marking the stages of Christ's Passion for devotional prayer.
- **Holy water font or stoup**: A vessel at an entrance containing blessed water. The faithful sign themselves as a reminder of Baptism.

Sacred Images

A **crucifix** is a cross bearing an image of the crucified Christ; that figure of Christ is called the **corpus**. A cross without the corpus is not a crucifix. Sacred images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and the saints help direct the faithful toward the mysteries of faith and the communion of saints. Catholics adore God alone. The honor shown to a sacred image is respectful veneration directed to the person represented, not worship of the material object itself.

Direction and Reverence

A **genuflection** is made by bending the right knee to the floor and signifies adoration. Outside Mass, Catholics genuflect toward the tabernacle when the Blessed Sacrament is reserved there. When the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, the priest, deacon, and other ministers normally genuflect when they approach the altar at the beginning of Mass and when they leave at the end. During Mass, they ordinarily bow profoundly to the altar when passing before it rather than genuflecting toward the tabernacle. The priest's genuflections after the elevations and before Communion are directed toward Christ present on the altar. The altar is revered because it signifies Christ and is the place of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

4. Sacred Vessels, Liturgical Books, Linens, and Other Objects

Sacred vessels, liturgical books, linens, and other objects serve the celebration of the Church's worship. They are treated with care because of their sacred purpose. The pronunciation guides below are simple approximations; slight variations may be heard.



Sacred Vessels

- **Chalice:** The cup that holds the wine which becomes the Precious Blood of Christ.
- **Paten** (pronounced **PAT-en**): A plate used for the bread to be consecrated.
- **Ciborium** (pronounced **sih-BOR-ee-um**): A vessel, often covered and chalice-shaped, used to hold consecrated hosts for distribution and reservation.
- **Communion plate:** A plate that may be held beneath a communicant to help prevent the consecrated Host or any fragment from falling.

- **Pyx** (pronounced **piks**): A small container used to carry Holy Communion to the sick or homebound.
- **Monstrance** (pronounced **MON-strans**) or **ostensorium**: A vessel that displays the consecrated Host for Eucharistic adoration and Benediction. Its name comes from a Latin word meaning “to show,” because it allows the Blessed Sacrament to be seen and adored.
- **Lunette or luna**: The circular holder that secures the consecrated Host within the monstrance.

Incense and Holy Water

- **Thurible** (pronounced **THUR-ih-bul**): The metal vessel in which incense is burned.
- **Incense boat**: The small container that holds incense before it is placed in the thurible.
- **Aspergillum** (pronounced **as-per-JIL-um**): An instrument used to sprinkle holy water.

Liturgical Books

- **Roman Missal**: Contains the prescribed prayers, chants, and directions used by the priest in celebrating Mass.
- **Lectionary**: Contains the Scripture readings assigned for Mass.
- **Book of the Gospels or Evangeliary** (pronounced **ee-van-JEL-ee-air-ee**): Contains the Gospel readings. It may be carried in the entrance procession and is treated with special honor. The Lectionary is not carried in the entrance procession.
- **Ritual books**: Contain the approved rites for sacraments and other liturgical celebrations, such as Baptism, Marriage, Penance, funerals, and blessings.

Altar Linens

- **Corporal** (pronounced **KOR-per-ul**): A square white cloth spread on the altar beneath the chalice, paten, and ciboria. It helps ensure that any fragments of the consecrated Host or drops of the Precious Blood can be reverently gathered. Its name comes from the Latin word *corpus*, meaning “body,” and points to the sacred Body of Christ placed upon it.
- **Purificator** (pronounced **PYUR-ih-fi-kay-ter**): A small white cloth used to wipe the chalice and assist in purifying sacred vessels. It is handled with special care because it may come into contact with the Precious Blood.
- **Pall**: A stiff square cover that may be placed over the chalice.
- **Chalice veil**: An optional veil that may cover the prepared chalice.
- **Altar cloth**: A white cloth covering the altar. It expresses reverence for the altar, which signifies Christ, and reflects the two inseparable aspects of the Eucharist: the sacrifice of Christ and the Lord’s banquet. Its whiteness also contributes to the dignity and festal character of the celebration.

Bread, Wine, Water, Candles, and Incense

The bread used for the Eucharist must be made only from wheat and be recently made so that there is no danger of spoilage. In the Latin Church, it is unleavened. The wine must be natural wine from grapes, pure and unspoiled. A small amount of water is mixed with the wine during the Preparation of the Gifts. The accompanying prayer recalls Christ's sharing in our humanity and our call to share in his divinity.

Candles express reverence and festivity and remind us of Christ, the light of the world. Incense is a sign of reverence and prayer rising before God. At Mass, incense may be used to honor the altar and cross, the Book of the Gospels, the Eucharistic gifts after the Consecration, the priest and people, and the Blessed Sacrament.

Other Objects

- **ProceSSIONAL cross:** A cross carried at the head of a procession.
- **Paschal candle** (pronounced **PASS-kul**): A large candle blessed at the Easter Vigil that symbolizes the risen Christ. Its markings commonly include a cross, the current year, and the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, reflecting that Christ is the beginning and the end. It is used throughout Easter Time and at Baptisms and funerals.
- **Ambry** (pronounced **AM-bree**): A secure cabinet in which the holy oils are kept.
- **Oil of Catechumens:** Blessed oil used before Baptism as a sign of cleansing and strengthening.
- **Oil of the Sick:** Blessed oil used in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
- **Sacred Chrism** (pronounced **KRIZ-um**): Perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop and used in Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and the dedication of churches and altars. Its fragrance signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Christian's call to spread the fragrance of Christ.
- **Sanctus bells:** Bells that may be rung during the Eucharistic Prayer according to local custom. They call attention to important moments and invite the faithful to focused adoration.
- **Lavabo bowl and towel** (pronounced **luh-VAH-boh**): Used when the priest washes his hands during the Preparation of the Gifts. The washing accompanies a prayer for interior purification; it is more than an act of physical cleanliness.

5. Ministers at Mass

The Mass is the action of Christ and the Church. The whole baptized assembly celebrates, with each person participating according to his or her role. Some ministries come through Holy Orders; others are instituted or entrusted to lay members of the faithful. These roles are distinct but work together in service of the Church's worship.

Ordained Ministers

- **Bishop:** A successor of the Apostles who receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. He is the chief shepherd and principal steward of the sacred mysteries in his diocese. His special chair is the **cathedra** (pronounced **kuh-THEE-druh**), from which the cathedral takes its name.
- **Priest:** Presides over the celebration, leads the prayer of the assembly, proclaims the Gospel when no deacon is present, may preach, and offers the Eucharistic sacrifice in the person of Christ the Head.
- **Deacon:** An ordained minister of service who assists the bishop or priest. At Mass, he ordinarily proclaims the Gospel, may preach, announces the intentions of the Universal Prayer, prepares the altar, assists with the chalice, and gives the dismissal.

Instituted Ministries

- **Instituted lector:** A lay minister formally instituted by the Church to serve the Word of God. At Mass, the lector proclaims the readings before the Gospel and may have other responsibilities connected with the Word. To **proclaim** is more than to read words aloud; it is to communicate the living Word clearly, faithfully, and prayerfully so that the assembly can hear and receive it.
- **Instituted acolyte** (pronounced **AK-uh-lite**): A lay minister formally instituted to serve at the altar and assist the priest and deacon. The acolyte has particular responsibilities in preparing the altar and, when needed, distributing Holy Communion and purifying sacred vessels.

Other Liturgical Ministries and Roles

- **Reader:** A qualified layperson entrusted to proclaim the readings before the Gospel when an instituted lector is not present. The reader should study and pray with the Scripture in advance, understand difficult names and phrases, and proclaim with clarity, proper pacing, and reverence. The goal is not dramatic performance, but faithful service of God's Word.
- **Altar server:** A person entrusted to assist the priest and deacon at the altar. Servers may carry the cross, candles, or incense; hold the Roman Missal; and help prepare the altar. Because their actions are visible and closely connected with the sacred rites, servers should know their responsibilities, move with dignity, remain attentive, and participate prayerfully even when they are not performing a specific task.

- **Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion:** A properly deputed, or formally authorized, layperson entrusted to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion when the ordinary ministers, bishops, priests, and deacons, are absent, impeded, or too few and the distribution of Holy Communion would otherwise be unduly prolonged. Because this ministry serves the Body and Blood of Christ, it calls for careful formation, reverence, appropriate dress, and faithful observance of the Church's procedures. *Extraordinary* means that this ministry responds to genuine pastoral need and supplements, but does not replace, the ordinary ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.
- **Cantor, choir, and instrumentalists:** Lead and support the assembly's sung prayer. Sacred music is part of the liturgy, not a performance inserted into it. Musicians should sing and play with skill and prayerful restraint, encourage the assembly's voice, and avoid drawing attention away from Christ and the sacred action.
- **Sacristan** (pronounced **SAK-ri-stun**): Prepares the church and the items needed for the liturgy, including books, vessels, linens, vestments, candles, and incense. The sacristan ensures that these items are properly arranged before Mass and appropriately cared for afterward. This ministry requires careful preparation, knowledge of the liturgy, and reverence for sacred objects.
- **Usher or greeter:** Often among the first people encountered at church, ushers and greeters extend the hospitality of the parish and help each person feel welcomed into the worshipping community. They assist with seating, the collection, Communion flow, emergencies, accessibility needs, and an orderly worship environment. Their attentiveness should be warm and discreet so that practical service supports prayer.
- **Master of ceremonies:** Helps coordinate ministers and ceremonial details, especially in more solemn celebrations.
- **The assembly:** The faithful are not spectators. They participate through attentive listening, prayer, song, responses, gestures, silence, and the offering of their lives with Christ. The quality of the assembly's participation matters: when people prepare, listen, respond, sing, and pray with intention, they help express the Church's unity and support the prayer of others. The more fully we give ourselves to the celebration, the more open we are to the grace Christ offers and to the mission on which he sends us.

Serving with Reverence

Those who serve in a liturgical ministry should remember that their words, actions, appearance, and conduct can either support or distract from the prayer of the assembly. Ministers should prepare in advance, understand their responsibilities, arrive early, dress in a manner appropriate for sacred worship, and carry out their roles with dignity, attentiveness, and reverence. Their manner should direct attention toward Christ and the liturgy rather than toward themselves. Liturgical ministry is not simply the performance of a task; it is an act of service to God and the Church.

6. Vestments and Liturgical Colors

Liturgical vestments identify the different ministries exercised in the celebration and contribute to the beauty and dignity of worship. They are not costumes or signs of personal importance; they help direct attention to the sacred role being carried out. The pronunciation guides below are simple approximations.

Vestments

- **Alb:** A long white garment worn by ordained ministers and by some lay ministers. Its whiteness recalls the baptismal garment and the Christian's new life in Christ.
- **Amice** (pronounced **AM-iss**): A rectangular cloth worn around the shoulders when the alb does not completely cover ordinary clothing at the neck.
- **Cincture** (pronounced **SINGK-cher**): A cord that may be tied around the waist over the alb. It gathers the alb and helps secure it for movement. Traditionally, it is also associated with readiness for service and purity of life.
- **Stole:** The distinctive vestment of ordained ministry and a visible sign of the authority and responsibility received through Holy Orders. A priest wears it around the neck and hanging down in front; a deacon wears it diagonally from the left shoulder and fastened at the right side.
- **Chasuble** (pronounced **CHAZ-uh-bul**): The principal outer vestment worn by the priest celebrant at Mass over the alb and stole. Its color normally corresponds to the liturgical day or season. Traditionally, it is associated with charity, the virtue that should cover and shape priestly service.
- **Dalmatic** (pronounced **dal-MAT-ik**): The outer vestment proper to the deacon at Mass, worn over the alb and stole. Its color normally matches the priest's chasuble. It identifies the deacon's ordained ministry at the altar and distinguishes his role from that of other assisting ministers.
- **Cope:** A cape-like vestment used for processions, Benediction, and other solemn rites outside Mass. Unlike the chasuble, it is not the priest's Eucharistic vestment and is not worn by him when celebrating Mass.
- **Humeral veil** (pronounced **HYOO-mer-ul**): A long cloth placed over the shoulders. During Benediction, the priest or deacon uses it when holding the monstrance so that his hands do not directly touch the vessel. This emphasizes that the blessing comes from Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament, not from the minister personally.
- **Surplice** (pronounced **SUR-pliss**): A white, shorter garment worn over a cassock by clergy or other ministers in some liturgical celebrations. It is commonly used for services or ministries in which an alb is not required.
- **Mitre** (pronounced **MY-ter**): The ceremonial head covering worn by a bishop at designated times in the liturgy.
- **Crosier** (pronounced **KROH-zher**): The bishop's pastoral staff, symbolizing his responsibility to shepherd the people entrusted to his care.

- **Pallium** (pronounced **PAL-ee-um**): A narrow woolen band worn over the vestments by the pope and metropolitan archbishops. It signifies communion with the See of Rome and the archbishop's pastoral responsibility.

Liturgical Colors

The color of the vestments helps identify the character of a liturgical season or celebration. These brief meanings are teaching aids; no single color can express the full mystery being celebrated.

- **White:** Expresses joy, light, glory, and resurrection. It is used during Christmas Time and Easter Time; for celebrations of the Lord other than those of his Passion; and for the Blessed Virgin Mary, angels, and saints who were not martyrs. In the United States, white may also be used for Masses for the Dead.
- **Red:** Recalls fire, the Holy Spirit, and blood poured out in witness to Christ. It is used on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, celebrations of the Lord's Passion, and celebrations of Apostles, Evangelists, and martyrs.
- **Green:** Used during Ordinary Time. It is commonly associated with hope, growth, and the steady Christian life.
- **Violet:** Expresses preparation and penitence. It is used during Advent and Lent and may also be used for Masses for the Dead.
- **Rose:** May be used on the Third Sunday of Advent, called **Gaudete Sunday**, and the Fourth Sunday of Lent, called **Laetare Sunday**. It marks a note of rejoicing within these seasons of preparation and penitence.
- **Black:** May be used for Masses for the Dead, expressing mourning and prayer for the deceased.
- **Gold or silver:** In the United States, these may be used on more solemn occasions in place of white, red, or green, but not in place of violet or black.

7. Gestures, Postures, Silence, and Responses

At Mass, we pray with the whole person: body, mind, and voice. Common postures and gestures express and foster the unity of the Church. They are not merely ceremonial or matters of personal preference. The following descriptions reflect the norms for the dioceses of the United States; accommodations are appropriate for age, health, disability, lack of space, or another reasonable cause.

- **Standing:** A posture of respect, readiness, and resurrection. The assembly stands from the Entrance chant through the Collect; for the Gospel; for the Creed and Universal Prayer; from the invitation "Pray, brethren" through the Sanctus; after the Great Amen for the Lord's Prayer and the remainder of the Communion Rite, except at the times for kneeling or sitting; and for the blessing and dismissal.
- **Sitting:** A posture of attentive listening, meditation, and receptivity. The assembly sits for the readings before the Gospel and the Responsorial Psalm, for the homily,

and during the Preparation of the Gifts. The faithful may sit or kneel during the period of sacred silence after Communion.

- **Kneeling:** A posture of adoration, humility, and prayer. In the dioceses of the United States, the faithful normally kneel after the Sanctus until after the Great Amen and again after the Agnus Dei, remaining kneeling until they rise to join the Communion procession, unless prevented by ill health, lack of space, a large crowd, or another reasonable cause, or unless the diocesan bishop has determined otherwise.
- **Genuflection:** Bending the right knee to the floor as an act of adoration. A genuflection is directed toward the Blessed Sacrament, whether reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for adoration.
- **Bow of the head:** A smaller gesture of reverence made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saint in whose honor Mass is celebrated.
- **Profound bow:** A bow of the body. The faithful make this bow during the Creed at the words “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” On the Solemnities of the Annunciation and the Nativity of the Lord, the Church’s directions for the celebration call for a genuflection at these words.
- **Sign of the Cross:** Tracing the cross from forehead to breast and from shoulder to shoulder while invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It begins and ends many Catholic prayers and reminds us of both the Trinity and our redemption through Christ’s Cross.
- **Small crosses before the Gospel:** The faithful trace a small cross on the forehead, lips, and breast. This expresses the prayer that the Gospel may be understood in the mind, proclaimed by the lips, and treasured in the heart.

Sacred Silence

Sacred silence is not empty time; it is part of the celebration. Before Mass, silence helps the church and ministers prepare prayerfully. During the Penitential Act and after invitations to pray, it allows personal recollection. After readings and the homily, it gives the Word of God space to be received. After Holy Communion, it allows prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

Spoken and Sung Responses

The assembly’s responses are acts of faith, not routine interruptions. By saying or singing “Amen,” “And with your spirit,” the Creed, the acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, and other responses, the faithful join themselves to the Church’s prayer. Responses should be made together, clearly and attentively. Singing has special importance because it unites words, music, and the voices of the assembly in one act of worship.

8. The Complete Order of the Mass

A. Introductory Rites

1. **Entrance:** The procession and chant begin the celebration, foster unity, and introduce the mystery of the day.
2. **Reverence of the altar:** The priest and deacon kiss the altar; incense may be used.
3. **Sign of the Cross:** The Mass begins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Greeting:** The priest greets the people; the response is “And with your spirit.”
5. **Penitential Act:** The assembly acknowledges sin and asks mercy. This is not the Sacrament of Penance and does not replace Confession for mortal sin.
6. **Kyrie:** “Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.” Kyrie eleison is Greek.
7. **Gloria:** An ancient hymn of praise sung or said on Sundays outside Advent and Lent, and on solemnities and feasts when prescribed.
8. **Collect:** The priest gathers or “collects” the prayers of the people in the opening prayer.

B. Liturgy of the Word

1. First Reading
2. Responsorial Psalm
3. Second Reading on Sundays and solemnities
4. Gospel Acclamation
5. Gospel
6. Homily
7. Profession of Faith on Sundays and solemnities
8. Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful

C. Liturgy of the Eucharist

1. Preparation of the Gifts and altar
2. Prayer over the Offerings
3. Eucharistic Prayer, including Preface, Sanctus, epiclesis, institution narrative and consecration, anamnesis, offering, intercessions, and final doxology
4. Lord’s Prayer
5. Rite of Peace
6. Fraction and Lamb of God
7. Invitation to Communion
8. Communion
9. Prayer after Communion

D. Concluding Rites

1. Brief announcements, if needed

2. Greeting
3. Blessing
4. Dismissal
5. Reverence to the altar and recession

9. The Liturgy of the Word and the Lectionary

When Scripture is proclaimed in the liturgy, God speaks to his people and Christ proclaims his Gospel. On Sundays and solemnities there are normally three readings. During most of the year the first is from the Old Testament; during Easter Time it is from Acts. The second is usually from a New Testament letter or Revelation. The final reading is always from one of the four Gospels.

The Sunday Lectionary normally follows a three-year cycle: Year A emphasizes Matthew, Year B emphasizes Mark, and Year C emphasizes Luke. John appears in all three cycles, especially during Lent and Easter and at other important times. Weekday readings normally follow a two-year cycle for the first reading, called Years I and II, while the Gospel cycle repeats annually. Year I is generally used in odd-numbered years and Year II in even-numbered years.

The Responsorial Psalm is itself the Word of God and is normally sung from the ambo. The Alleluia is omitted during Lent and replaced by another acclamation. The Gospel receives special honor: the assembly stands; candles and incense may accompany it; it is proclaimed by a deacon or priest; and the book may be kissed afterward.

The homily is an important part of the Liturgy of the Word. It draws from the Scripture readings or another text of the Mass and helps the faithful understand God's Word and apply it to Christian faith and daily life. The priest or deacon may develop the homily through the mystery being celebrated, the truths of the Catholic faith, or the particular needs of the listeners, while remaining connected with the liturgical texts and celebration. The homily deserves attentive listening, but it belongs within the larger worship of the Mass, where Christ gathers his people, speaks through Sacred Scripture, makes his sacrifice sacramentally present, and gives himself in the Eucharist.

Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful

After hearing God's Word and professing the Creed, the assembly responds by praying for the needs of the Church and the world. The intentions normally include the Church; public authorities and the salvation of the world; those burdened by difficulty; and the local community. The people participate by joining in the common response.

Key Books and Terms

- **Lectionary:** The arranged collection of biblical passages proclaimed at Mass.
- **Pericope** (pronounced **puh-RIK-uh-pee**): A selected passage of Scripture appointed for reading.

- **Responsorial Psalm:** A psalm with a repeated response by the assembly.
- **Sequence:** A liturgical hymn before the Gospel Acclamation on certain days. It is required on Easter and Pentecost and optional on some other celebrations.
- **Solemnity:** The highest rank of celebration.
- **Feast:** A rank below solemnity.
- **Memorial:** A celebration of a saint that may be obligatory or optional.

10. The Creed: What Catholics Profess

The word **creed** comes from the Latin *Credo*, meaning “I believe.” At Mass, the Creed is the assembly’s response to the Word of God and a public profession of the faith received from the Apostles. By reciting it together, Catholics do more than list teachings; they entrust themselves to the one God in whom the Church believes. The Creed is Trinitarian, professing faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in the Church and God’s saving promises.

The Two Creeds Commonly Used in Catholic Worship

Catholics do not have two different faiths. The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed express the same apostolic faith in different forms. The Apostles’ Creed is shorter and closely connected with Baptism and catechesis. The Nicene Creed is more detailed because it uses carefully chosen language to defend the Church’s faith in the full divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles’ Creed: Origin and Purpose

The Apostles’ Creed was not written as a single document by the Twelve Apostles. Its name means that it faithfully summarizes the apostolic faith. It developed from ancient baptismal questions and professions of faith used in the Church of Rome. Its roots reach back to the early centuries of the Church, and its familiar wording developed gradually for use in Baptism, catechesis, and prayer.

The Apostles’ Creed professes faith in God the Father; Jesus Christ, his only Son; Christ’s conception by the Holy Spirit, birth from the Virgin Mary, suffering, death, burial, descent to the dead, Resurrection, Ascension, and return as judge; and the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Its concise wording makes it especially useful for Baptism, catechesis, the Rosary, and the renewal of baptismal promises.

At Mass, the Apostles’ Creed may be used in place of the Nicene Creed, especially during Lent and Easter, because of its baptismal character. The phrase “he descended into hell” means that Christ truly died and descended to the realm of the dead. It does not mean that he entered the state of eternal separation from God; it proclaims his victory for the righteous who awaited the Redeemer.

The Nicene Creed: Historical Background

In the early fourth century, Arius taught that the Son was a creature rather than eternal God. The Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 rejected this error and confessed that the Son is “begotten, not made” and **consubstantial** (pronounced **kon-sub-STAN-shul**) with the Father. This means that the Father and the Son possess the one divine nature.

The First Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 reaffirmed the faith of Nicaea and gave fuller expression to the Church’s faith in the Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the giver of life,” who is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son. The Creed used at Mass is therefore properly called the **Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed** (pronounced **NY-seen kon-STAN-tih-noh-POL-ih-tan**), though it is commonly called the Nicene Creed.

In the Latin Church, the words “and the Son,” called the **Filioque** (pronounced **fil-ee-OH-kway**), became part of the profession that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Eastern Catholic and Orthodox traditions express this mystery with different wording. The Catholic Church recognizes that these expressions can be complementary when properly understood; both confess that the Holy Spirit is fully divine and eternally related to the Father and the Son.

The Nicene Creed Explained

The Creed uses carefully chosen words to express the central mysteries of the Catholic faith. The explanations below are brief guides to what Catholics profess together at Mass.

“I believe in one God”

Christians believe in one God, not three gods. The one God exists eternally as three distinct divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This mystery is called the Trinity.

“The Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth”

God freely created everything visible and invisible. Creation is good, depends upon God, and is ordered by his wisdom. God’s almighty power is never separated from his goodness and love.

“One Lord Jesus Christ”

Jesus is not merely a teacher or prophet. “Lord” is a divine title. He is the eternal Son of God, begotten of the Father, not created. The Son has always existed with the Father.

“Consubstantial with the Father”

Consubstantial means “of the same substance” or “of the same divine nature.” The Father and the Son are distinct divine Persons, but the Son is fully and eternally God, equal in divinity with the Father.

“Through him all things were made”

The Son did not begin to exist when Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb. All things were created through the eternal Son, the Word of God.

“For us ... and for our salvation”

The Son of God became man to save humanity from sin and death and restore us to communion with God. The word **Incarnation** means that the eternal Son truly took on human nature while remaining fully divine.

“By the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man”

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Son took human nature from the Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ is one divine Person with two natures, divine and human; he is fully God and fully man. Mary is rightly called Mother of God because the person she conceived and bore is the divine Son made flesh.

Passion, death, burial, and Resurrection

Jesus truly suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried. His Resurrection was bodily and real, not merely the survival of his teachings or memory. “In accordance with the Scriptures” shows that these events fulfill God’s saving plan.

Ascension, Glory, and Return

Christ ascended into heaven. To say that he is “seated at the right hand of the Father” expresses his divine glory, authority, and kingship; it does not describe a physical location beside the Father. Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

“The Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life”

The Holy Spirit is the third divine Person of the Trinity, not an impersonal force. The Spirit gives life, is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son, and spoke through the prophets. In the Latin form of the Creed, Catholics profess that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

“One, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”

- **One:** The Church has one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, and one Spirit. Divisions among Christians wound this visible unity and call all Christians to prayer and work for unity.
- **Holy:** Christ is the source of the Church’s holiness. Her members remain sinners who continually need conversion.
- **Catholic:** The word means “universal.” The Church proclaims the whole faith, possesses the fullness of the means of salvation, and is sent to all peoples.

- **Apostolic:** The Church is founded on the Apostles, preserves their teaching, and continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided through their successors.

Baptism, resurrection, and eternal life

There is one Baptism because it permanently marks the Christian and is not repeated. The Creed looks forward to the resurrection of the body, not only the survival of the soul.

Eternal life is perfect communion with the Triune God and all the redeemed. **Amen** means “truly” or “so be it”; it expresses personal assent to the faith just professed.

11. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows the pattern of Christ’s actions at the Last Supper: he took bread and wine, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples. In the Mass, these actions correspond to the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, the Fraction, and Holy Communion.

Preparation of the Gifts

During the Preparation of the Gifts, the altar is prepared and bread and wine are brought forward. Gifts for the support of the Church and the care of the poor may also be presented, but money and other gifts are placed in a suitable place rather than on the altar. Bread and wine represent gifts of creation and the work of human hands. Joined to Christ’s perfect offering, the faithful also offer themselves, their work, joys, sufferings, and desire to live as his disciples.

The priest places a small amount of water in the wine. The accompanying prayer recalls Christ’s sharing in our humanity and our call to share in his divinity. He then washes his hands at the side of the altar, praying quietly for cleansing from sin. After the invitation “Pray, brethren,” the people respond, and the Prayer over the Offerings concludes this preparation.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is the center and high point of the entire Mass. It is addressed to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The priest proclaims it in the name of the whole Church while acting in the person of Christ the Head. The faithful do not merely listen; they unite their hearts and lives with the prayer, participate through the prescribed acclamations, and join their offering to Christ’s one perfect sacrifice.

- **Opening dialogue:** The priest greets the people, invites them to lift up their hearts, and calls them to give thanks to the Lord. Their responses show that the Eucharistic Prayer is the prayer of the whole Church.
- **Preface:** The priest, in the name of the whole people, glorifies the Father and gives thanks for the work of salvation or for a particular mystery of the day or season.

- **Sanctus:** In singing or saying “Holy, Holy, Holy,” the assembly joins the angels and saints in the worship of heaven.
- **Epiclesis:** The Church calls upon the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ and upon the faithful so that they may become one body in Christ.
- **Institution narrative and Consecration:** The priest recounts Christ’s words and actions at the Last Supper. By the power of Christ’s words and the action of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- **Transubstantiation:** The Church uses this term for the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of Christ’s Body and the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood. The appearances, such as taste, color, and texture, remain. After the Consecration, what appears to be bread and wine is truly Christ himself, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.
- **Mystery of Faith:** The priest announces “The mystery of faith,” and the people proclaim Christ’s saving Death and Resurrection as they await his return.
- **Anamnesis:** Obeying Christ’s command, the Church remembers his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. This liturgical memorial does not repeat these events; Christ’s one Paschal Mystery is sacramentally made present.
- **Offering:** The Church offers the spotless Victim, Christ, to the Father and learns to offer herself with him. The Eucharist is the same sacrifice as the Cross because the priest and Victim are the same Christ; the manner of offering is sacramental.
- **Intercessions:** The prayer shows that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, including the pope and the local bishop. The living and the dead are remembered, together with Mary, the Apostles, and all the saints.
- **Final doxology:** The priest elevates the paten with the consecrated Host and the chalice while giving all glory and honor to the Father, through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. When a deacon is present, he ordinarily elevates the chalice beside the priest.
- **Great Amen:** The people’s “Amen” ratifies the entire Eucharistic Prayer. It should be a clear and wholehearted profession of faith in the prayer and sacrifice just offered.

12. The Communion Rite and Concluding Rites

The Communion Rite prepares the faithful to receive the Body and Blood of Christ and expresses the unity of the Church. Holy Communion is not an individual devotion separated from the Mass; it is participation in the sacrificial banquet of the Eucharist.

The Communion Rite

1. **Lord’s Prayer:** The family of God prays the words taught by Jesus. The prayer asks for “daily bread,” forgiveness, deliverance from evil, and the coming of God’s kingdom; it prepares the faithful for Holy Communion. The priest prays with hands extended in the traditional **orans** posture (pronounced **OR-ahns**), a posture of prayer with the arms extended, as he presides over the prayer of the Church. This

prescribed ministerial gesture reflects his role in leading the assembly's prayer and should not be confused with a gesture assigned to everyone.

2. **Embolism and doxology:** The priest expands the final petition of the Lord's Prayer, asking deliverance from evil and peace in our days. The people conclude with the doxology, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever."
3. **Rite of Peace:** The Church asks Christ for peace and unity. The faithful offer a sober sign of peace to those nearby according to local custom. This is not merely a social greeting; the peace comes from Christ and prepares the community to share in the one Bread.
4. **Fraction:** The priest breaks the consecrated Host. This ancient action gave the Eucharist the name "Breaking of the Bread." The breaking does not divide Christ; the whole Christ is present in every part of the consecrated species.
5. **Commingling:** The priest places a small piece of the consecrated Host into the chalice. This signifies the unity of the Body and Blood of the living and glorious Christ.
6. **Agnus Dei:** The "Lamb of God" is sung or said while the Fraction takes place. The invocation asks Christ, the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, for mercy and peace.
7. **Invitation to Communion:** The priest shows the Eucharist and says, "Behold the Lamb of God." The faithful respond with words adapted from the centurion in the Gospel: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."
8. **Reception of Holy Communion:** The minister says, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ." The communicant answers, "Amen," expressing belief that this is truly Christ and assent to communion with his Body, the Church.
9. **Communion procession and chant:** The faithful approach together as one body. The Communion chant expresses spiritual union, joy of heart, and the communal character of the procession.
10. **Sacred silence or hymn of praise:** After Communion, the priest and faithful may pray quietly for a time. A psalm, canticle, or hymn of praise may also be sung by the whole assembly.
11. **Prayer after Communion:** The priest asks that the sacrament received bear fruit in the lives of the faithful. The people make the prayer their own by responding, "Amen."

Preparing to Receive Holy Communion

To receive Holy Communion is to receive Christ himself. Catholics should approach with faith, reverence, and a properly prepared heart. Anyone conscious of having committed a mortal sin must receive absolution in the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion. A person who does not receive may remain in place and pray for a deeper desire for union with Christ.

Christ is received whole and entire under either Eucharistic species. A person who receives only the consecrated Host or only the Precious Blood receives the whole Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

In the Latin Church, the Eucharistic fast is normally at least one hour before receiving Holy Communion. Water and medicine do not break the fast. Special provisions apply to the elderly, the sick, and those who care for them.

In the dioceses of the United States, the norm is to receive Communion standing unless an individual chooses to kneel. Before receiving, the communicant makes a bow of the head as an act of reverence. The consecrated Host may be received on the tongue or, where permitted, in the hand. The communicant should consume the Host immediately and handle the Eucharist with the greatest reverence.

The Concluding Rites

The Concluding Rites include brief announcements when necessary, the priest's greeting and blessing, the dismissal, and the reverence to the altar before the ministers depart. The deacon gives the dismissal when present; otherwise, the priest gives it.

The dismissal does not merely announce that Mass is over. The word *Mass* is connected with this sending. Strengthened by God's Word and the Eucharist, the faithful are sent to glorify God by their lives, serve others, bear witness to Christ, and bring the Gospel into their homes, workplaces, schools, and communities. The people respond, "Thanks be to God," giving thanks for what they have received and accepting the mission entrusted to them.

13. The Liturgical Year and Calendar

The liturgical year unfolds the whole mystery of Christ through seasons and celebrations. It is not simply a calendar of religious events; through the Church's worship, the mysteries of Christ's life, Death, and Resurrection are proclaimed and made present so that the faithful may receive grace and be formed as disciples. The liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent.

- **Advent:** A season of hope and preparation for Christ's coming. The Church prepares to celebrate his birth and looks forward to his return in glory. Violet is used; rose may be used on the Third Sunday, called **Gaudete Sunday** (pronounced **gow-DEH-teh**).
- **Christmas Time:** Celebrates the Nativity of the Lord and his manifestation to the world. The season includes celebrations such as the Holy Family, Mary, the Holy Mother of God, the Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord. White is used.
- **Ordinary Time, first period:** Begins after the Christmas season and continues until Ash Wednesday. The Church reflects on Christ's public ministry, teaching, and works.

- **Lent:** A penitential season of preparation for Easter, marked especially by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and continues until before the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. Its forty-day character recalls Christ's forty days of fasting in the desert. Violet is used; rose may be used on the Fourth Sunday, called **Laetare Sunday** (pronounced **lay-TAH-ray**).
- **Sacred Paschal Triduum** (pronounced **TRID-yoo-um**): The holiest period of the liturgical year. It begins with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, continues with the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, and enters the quiet waiting of Holy Saturday. It reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil and concludes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. Together, these days form one unfolding commemoration of Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection.
- **Easter Time:** Fifty days of joyful celebration from Easter Sunday through Pentecost. The season celebrates the risen Christ, his Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. White is used; red is used on Pentecost.
- **Ordinary Time, second period:** Resumes after Pentecost and continues until the First Sunday of Advent. It concludes the yearly unfolding of Christ's mystery and includes the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Understanding the Calendar

Ordinary Time takes its name from the ordered or numbered weeks of the year; it does not mean unimportant or plain. Green is normally used, expressing hope and steady growth in the Christian life.

Sunday is the Lord's Day, the weekly celebration of Christ's Resurrection, and the foundation of the whole liturgical year. The Paschal Mystery is celebrated at every Mass, whatever the season.

The calendar includes different ranks of celebration. A **solemnity** is the highest rank and begins with Evening Prayer on the preceding evening. A **feast** is a joyful celebration of the Lord, Mary, an Apostle, or another saint of particular importance. A **memorial** honors a saint and may be obligatory or optional. Local calendars also include celebrations proper to a nation, diocese, parish, or religious community.

A **holy day of obligation** is a day on which Catholics are obliged to participate in Mass unless excused for a serious reason or dispensed. The observance of particular holy days can vary by country and, in some cases, by **ecclesiastical province**, a group of neighboring dioceses led by a metropolitan archbishop, or by diocese.