

The Mass



Common Words:

Mass:

Comes from the dismissal rite and means, “the sending forth.” It is a reminder that Christians who have been nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist are called to go out into the world and offer to others what they themselves have received.

Eucharist:

a Greek word meaning, “thanksgiving.” The Eucharist is primarily a communal service of giving thanks to God.

Liturgy:

a Greek word meaning, “work of the people.” It is referring to the public worship of the Church in all of its forms—Mass, the Sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Mass

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MASS:

- When the early Christians were excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue, around 70 A.D., they took with them all of what they knew—
 - the Hebrew Scriptures
 - Jewish Passover
 - Temple sacrifices
- These things helped form the structure of their Christian worship.
 - The Jewish Passover was particularly important.

The Passover was celebrated by the Jews as a:

1. Memorial feast—remembering the liberation of Israel from Egypt.
2. Thanksgiving meal—praising God for delivering them from bondage.
3. Covenant meal—uniting God to all His people.
4. Communion meal—in which all His people share in His gifts.

The Mass In the 2nd Century

“And on the day which is called the Sun’s Day there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or the country; and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president gives a discourse, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate these excellent examples. Then we all rise together and offer prayer: and, as I said above, on the conclusion of our prayer, bread is bought, and wine and water; and the president similarly offers up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his power, and the people assent with *Amen*.”

-The Defense and Explanation of Christian Faith and Practice
“Christian Worship,” St. Justin Martyr, 2nd Century.

The Mass in the Second Century compared to today

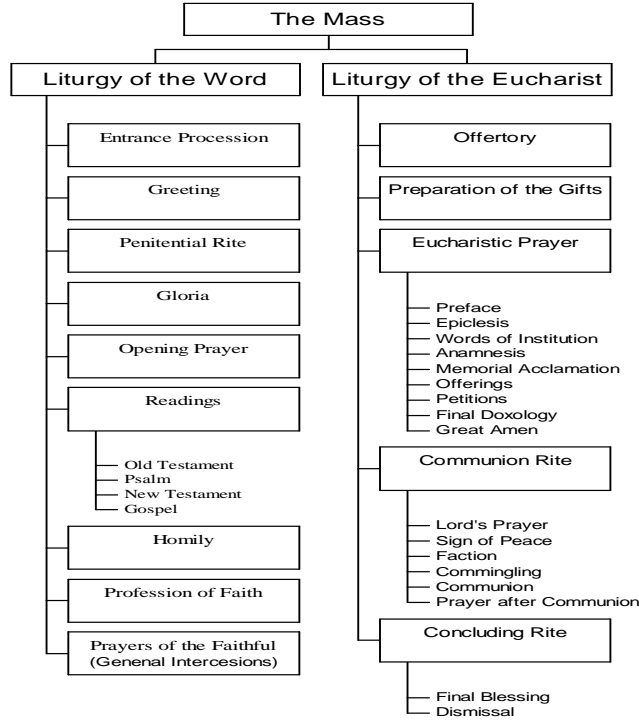
2nd Century:

Readings
Homily
Prayers of the Faithful
Offertory
Eucharistic Prayer
People’s assent with Amen
Communion
Collection

Today:

Readings
Homily
Prayers of the Faithful
Collection
Offertory
Eucharistic Prayer
Great Amen
Communion

The Structure of the Mass



The Mass

■ **The Liturgy of the Word**

■ The Entrance Procession

- In the earliest days of the Church, the Eucharist was celebrated in homes and didn't include an entrance procession (unless you include people journeying to the home where the Mass was being held).
- In later centuries, the entrance procession became very elaborate, with the whole congregation following the celebrant through the city streets to the church. Hymns were written to accompany this procession.
- Today, we begin the Mass with an entrance procession and an entrance hymn (which usually reflects the theme of the day).

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Word**

- Greeting

- The priest begins-- "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:19).
- The priest then expresses the presence of the Lord with the community.
 - "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:13).
 - "The Lord be with you" (Ruth 2:4).

- Penitential Rite: an expression of sorrow for sins and recognition of God's mercy and love.

- In the early Church, only the priest made this prayer. By the tenth century, the whole congregation was praying the Confiteor, "I confess to Almighty God..." (James 5:16; Romans 12:16; James 3:6; James 4:17; 1 Thes. 5: 25; 1 John 1:19).
- The triple invocation, "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have Mercy," is one of the oldest known prayers in the Mass. Its early, Greek form, "Kyrie eleison" is often times still used (Tobit 8:4; 1 Tim. 1:2).

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Word**
 - Gloria
 - The earliest Christians copied the Jewish practice of singing canticles based on Scripture songs during their liturgy (ex. The Magnificat and the Cantic of Zechariah in the Gospel of Luke). The early Christian communities composed their own songs of praise.
 - The Gloria—in the very same words we use today—is found in Christian prayer books as early as 380 A.D.!
 - Opening Prayer
 - Also known as the collect, it concludes the introductory rite with a prayer addressed to God the Father.
 - In the early Church, the celebrant composed these prayers, but, as the Church grew, it was necessary to standardize them so as to show the unity of the Body of Christ.

The Gloria is composed from these Scripture verses: Luke 2:14; Revelation 19:6, 22:9; Ephesians 5:20; Revelation 7:12; 2 John 3; John 1:29; Romans 8:34; Luke 4:34; Revelation 15:4; Luke 1:32; John 14:26.

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Word

■ The Readings

■ On Sundays, the readings follow this pattern:

- The first reading is generally taken from the Old Testament.
- Then we sing, or sometimes say, one of the Psalms.
- The second reading is taken from a non-Gospel book of the New Testament.
- Lastly, the priest or deacon reads from one of the Gospels.

■ In the Jewish tradition, the Scriptures were given great reverence. The Hebrew Torah, or the scroll of God's Word, was lavishly decorated and carried around the Temple in procession. Similarly, in the Christian tradition, the Scriptures (more specifically, the Book of Gospels) is often carried in procession, incensed, and kissed by the bishop, priest as a sign of respect.

Before the reading of the Gospel, the congregation often sings, "Alleluia," which is a Jewish shout of joy.

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Word**

- The Homily

- A homily is a sermon based upon the Word of God rather than on a particular topic.
- The homily has always had an important place in the Mass. In the early Church, this would have taken the form of the celebrant "discussing" the Scriptures with those who were at Mass. Later, as priests became educated in Scripture and the teachings of the Church, they began offering more formal sermons.

The Mass

■ **The Liturgy of the Word**

■ The Profession of Faith

- After the homily, the whole congregation joins a profession of faith. This is called the Nicene Creed, because it came from the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., and modified by the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D.

■ The Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions)

- This is an opportunity for the community to offer its prayers to God.
- These prayers are not meant to be private prayers, but universal prayers.

The oldest Creed, the Apostle's Creed, was formulated in the early Church (probably second century) and was an easy way to summarize all Christian teaching. In later years, the Catechumens—men and women joining the Church—memorized it.

The Mass

■ **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- The Offertory: is the bringing up of the gifts of bread and wine.
 - In its earliest form, the offertory consisted of different families bringing the bread and wine to the Mass as a gift.
 - By the fourth century, the procession had become a little more elaborate, with not only the gifts of bread and wine being brought forward, but also food for the poor, incense, and candles. By the eleventh century these elaborate processions were simplified due to the large congregations. At that time, the collection was brought forward and symbolic gifts of bread and wine. Today, we have a simple procession with members of the community bringing forward the bread and wine to be used at the Mass. Usually there is an offertory song to accompany the procession.

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

■ The Preparation of the Gifts

- The priest receives the gifts that are brought forward and places them on the altar. He then prays a blessing prayer over the bread and then the wine.
- The priest, depending upon the length of the offertory hymn, sometimes prays these two prayers silently.

The prayer over the gifts:

- “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made (*Ecclesiastes 3:13*), it will become for us the bread of life (*John 6:35*).
- “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become for us our spiritual drink (*Luke 22:17-18*).
- And the people respond, “Blessed be God forever” (*Psalms 68:36*).

The prayer for the preparation of the gifts have their origin in the Jewish blessing prayers used at the Sabbath. They are quite possibly the same words that Jesus himself used in blessing the bread and wine at the Last Supper.

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

■ The Preparation of the Gifts

- Part of the preparation of the wine includes the priest pouring a small amount of water into it. This was a custom of ancient times, both in religious and secular practice. It helped to dilute the wine. Early Christians continued this practice, but it also took on a couple of symbolic meanings.
 - First, it represented the union of Christ with the Church. Just as the wine receives the water and takes it into itself, Christ receives the faithful and makes them one with him.
 - Also, it represented the two natures of Christ. Just as the wine and water cannot be separated, Jesus' divine and human natures were completely unified.
- After preparing the gifts, the priest washes his hands.
 - Like the mixing of the water and wine, this was originally a practical action, but now it has a more symbolic meaning.
 - Washing one's hands as a sign of inner purity was customary both in Judaism and early Christianity. Today it remains in the liturgy as a reminder of our need to be cleansed from sin.

The silent prayer offered by the priest as he washes his hands is, "Lord, wash away my iniquities and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2).

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- The Eucharistic Prayer

- After the preparation of the gifts, we begin the Eucharistic Prayer. As mentioned earlier, the blessing prayer over the bread and wine is modeled after the Jewish prayer on the Sabbath. This prayer is called the *berakah*. The *berakah* had two forms—an informal one (as at the blessing of the bread and wine) and a formal one. The Eucharistic Prayer is structured after the formal *berakah*. It begins with an invocation of praise and thanks (“Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.”), and then recalls the wondrous works of God, especially in Jesus. It also offers petitions and concludes with the doxology (“Through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever”).

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- There are several different Eucharistic Prayers the priest can choose from for Mass. Each contains the same basic parts.

- **The Preface:** This follows Jesus' model of praise and thanks to the Father. It begins with, "The Lord be with you." This part of the preface dates back, unchanged, to the second century. The preface concludes with a song of praise ("Holy, holy, holy..." taken from *Isaiah 6:3* and *Mark 11:9-10*)
- **Epiclesis.** This Greek word refers to the calling on God to send His Holy Spirit to bless the gifts we bring before Him.
- **The Words of Institution:** often referred to as the consecration consists of the recitation of Jesus' words at the Last Supper. Back when the Mass was celebrated in Latin, and the words of consecration were spoken softly, the people would be alerted to this important part in the liturgy by the ringing of the bells.
- **Anamnesis.** This is the Greek word for memorial. It means much more than our word, "remember." Anamnesis involves the actual presence of the thing/action being remembered. This is important to the understanding of the Mass. When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he wasn't simply asking us to remember what he had done, but to make present, here and now, what took place then.

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- **The Memorial Acclamation:** After the "institution narrative," as described above, the congregation sings the memorial acclamation. This is the congregation's response to the *anamnesis*.
- **The Offerings:** For Christians, the Eucharist replaces the bloody sacrifices of the Old Covenant. Through the priest, we offer to God the Father the final and perfect sacrifice, Christ.
- **Petitions:** The Eucharistic Prayer then moves into petitions. Praying specifically for: 1) unity in the Church, mentioning the Holy Spirit as the source of that unity, 2) the Pope and our Church leaders, 3) and those who have died.
- **The Final Doxology:** The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the priest praying/singing the doxology ("Through Him, with Him, and in Him..." *Romans 8:20-21*).
- **The Great Amen:** This is the congregation's response to the whole Eucharistic Prayer. The word, "amen," is usually translated to mean "I agree" or "yes" or "so be it." But the Hebrew root word that amen is derived from literally means, "to pound in one's tent stake."

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- The Communion Rite: is our sharing in the sacred meal, the Eucharist.
 - **The Lord's Prayer:** is the first part of the Communion Rite. It is especially appropriate for this part of the liturgy because it asks God to supply us with our "daily bread," and to forgive us our sins.
 - The Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4*) has been an important part of the Church's prayer life from the very beginning. The Catechumens were entrusted with the Lord's Prayer, as well as the Creed, on the eve of their Baptism.
 - In the Early Church, it was only the priest who recited this prayer during Mass, but beginning in the sixth century it became a communal part of the liturgy.
 - The words, "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever" are not an original part of the Bible. Most Protestant Bibles include these words, but they actually come from the *Didache* (also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 1st Century).

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- **The Sign of Peace:** also known as the kiss of peace, is a kiss, embrace, or handshake exchanged between friends and signifying their unity of belief (St. Paul reminds Christians to "greet each other with a brotherly kiss," as a sign of their unity in Christ [*Romans 12:9*]) and a sign of reconciliation (*Matthew 5:23-24*).
 - It should never become a mere greeting or polite gesture, but a sincere and prayerful wish that God bless us all with His peace.
- **The Faction:** also known as the breaking of the bread, has two important meanings. The early Church broke bread because 1) Jesus had done it the night before he died and 2) it was necessary to divide the bread among those present.
 - As congregations grew larger and the breaking of the bread took longer, the "Lamb of God" was sung to accompany the action. "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us..." (*John 1:29*).
 - As congregations continued to grow larger, it was no longer possible to use one loaf for everyone. The use of individual "hosts" (around the 10th century) became the norm. The breaking of the bread by the priest then took on a more symbolic meaning.

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

The Mass

■ **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- **The Commingling:** refers to the action of the priest breaking off a small fragment of the Eucharist and placing it in the chalice. This custom, which originated in the seventh century, symbolically demonstrates the unity of the Body and Blood of Christ.
 - This gesture was especially important during those centuries when people received only the Body of Christ.
 - For a short time, this gesture also signified the unity of the Church. The Pope would send small portions of the Eucharist from the Mass he was presiding at to the local churches to use at this moment in the Mass.
 - While we believe that both species, the Body and the Blood, contain the full presence of the Risen Christ, the fullest expression of the Eucharist includes taking both.

The Mass

■ **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Before receiving the Eucharist, we recognize that we are not worthy of Christ.
 - Communion begins with the priest elevating the Host and chalice and saying, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper" (*Revelation 19:9*).
 - All respond, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed" (*Matthew 8:8*).
 - This exchange of words highlights the fact that we are in need of God's mercy. Just as Jesus ate and drank with sinners, he continues to do so today.

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- The Catholic Church does not have open Communion. This is for two important reasons.

- First, it was the belief of the early Church that no one should receive Communion who did not believe that it was the Risen Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

- The *Didache* (1st Century) states "Let none eat or drink of this Eucharist of yours except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord" (i.e.- Catholics).

- St. Paul emphasizes this in his first letter to the Corinthians, writing, "Anyone who receives the Eucharist as though it were ordinary bread heaps condemnation upon themselves" (*1 Cor. 11:29*).

- Secondly, the Eucharist is the greatest sign of unity in our faith. To enable non-Catholics to receive Communion would be feigning a unity that doesn't yet exist.

- "Shun divisions, as the beginning of evils. All of you follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles. Let no one do anything that pertains to the church apart from the bishop. Let that Eucharist be considered valid which is under the bishop or one whom he has delegated" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop of Antioch, martyred c. 115 A.D.).

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

As the people come forward for Communion, the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Communion says, "The Body of Christ," or "The Blood of Christ." The Communicant replies, "Amen."

The Mass

■ The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- There are two accepted methods of receiving the Host.
 - Some Catholics prefer to receive Communion in the hand. "When you go to receive communion go not with your wrists extended, nor with your fingers separated, **but placing your left hand as a throne for your right, which is to receive so great a King, and in the hollow of the palm receive the body of Christ**, saying, Amen" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.)
 - Some Catholics prefer to receive Communion on the tongue. Beginning in the Middle Ages, the practice of receiving Communion on the tongue gained popularity. This was in part to combat a decline in Eucharistic reverence. It was also at this time, and for the same reason, that Eucharistic Adoration gained popularity. Today, the various Bishops Conferences are given the authority to allow Communion in the hand as well as on the tongue.

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

It is encouraged that Catholics make some sign of reverence as they approach the Eucharist. This is our recognition that we are approaching the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This is also the reason for our kneeling and genuflecting when the Eucharist is present.

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- **The Concluding Rite:** marks the end of Mass.

- The final blessing is reminiscent of the final blessings found in many of the Letters in the New Testament. The final blessing from a Bishop, "Blessed by the name of the Lord... Our help is in the name of the Lord..." follows from the Old Testament (*Daniel 2:20 and Psalm 124:8*).
- Blessings were a routine part of Jewish family life, with the father offering a blessing for his family whenever he or they would leave the house. The Bishop, or his representative, the priest, offers this blessing as the father of our spiritual family.
- The dismissal follows the final blessing. It is a simple declaration by the priest or deacon for us to carry our faith with us into the community. The congregation proclaims, "Thanks be to God!" (*2 Cor. 9:15*). Ultimately, the dismissal is less an end to the Mass and more a beginning of living what we have just received.

The Mass

- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- **The Movements of Mass**

- There is a lot of movement during Mass. These various movements, or postures, tell us significant things about what's taking place. For example, during the reading of the Gospel we all stand. This helps to demonstrate the preeminence that the Gospels have in Sacred Scripture. During the Eucharistic Prayer we kneel, since kneeling and genuflecting is a way to show reverence to a lord, and Jesus is the Lord of Lords. Sitting is a posture that shows receptivity (unless, of course, one has fallen asleep during the sermon).
 - There is also a lot of verbal exchange going on during Mass. The exchange of prayers between the priest and the congregation truly makes Mass liturgy, "the work of the people." People don't *attend* Mass, they *participate* in Mass.

The Mass



“For what is the bread? The body of Christ.
And what do they become who partake of it?
The body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body”
--St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, 350 A.D.