



THE MASS

BY
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"The Mass" will help you understand how to fully, consciously, and actively participate in the source and summit of the Christian life."

- Lesson 1: A Privileged Encounter
- Lesson 2: Called Out Of The World
- Lesson 3: God Speaks Our Story
- Lesson 4: Responding to God
- Lesson 5: Preparing for Sacrifice
- Lesson 6: The Real Presence Creates Communion

Lesson 1: A Privileged Encounter



Description

Catholics today are inarguably better educated than at any time in the history of the Church. If at one time only priests and religious were capable of reading Scripture or the great theologians and Fathers of the Church, while the people in the pews found their greatest instruction via stained glass depictions of our story rendered in glorious bursts of color, those days are over. Nowadays many Catholics in attendance at our local parishes will, like their priests, hold advanced degrees in their particular field of study.

Expertise and credentials abound in Western society in the twenty-first century, but ask these educated Catholics what is happening at the Mass, and the answer will often surprise and may sometimes dishearten. Some will respond that Catholics are gathering in order to “be Church” or “be Community” together, and they are not wholly wrong, but they’re not wholly right, either. Others will say they are “sharing a meal,” which is also partly right.

Too many, however, will tell you that they are making “a symbolic remembrance of the Last Supper,” which is dead wrong and may be why, as Bishop Robert Barron relates in this first portion of his discourse on the Mass, only “20 to 25 percent” of Catholics in the United States attend Mass on Sunday. If Catholics believe the Mass is just a meal, or a memorial, it makes sense that they’re staying away. Who bothers to worship what they perceive to be a lifeless idea, one flowing passively along (as G.K. Chesterton noted) within the steady stream of other dead things?

Outline

- I. INTRODUCTION
 - A. Full, conscious, and active participation
 - B. Some Catholics aren't sure what they're participating in
 - C. Eucharist as the "source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324)
- II. WHAT IS THE MASS?
 - A. Encounter with Jesus Christ
 - B. Finding out who we really are
 - C. Getting together with friends
 - 1. We talk: Liturgy of the Word
 - 2. We eat: Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - D. Mystery: "a concrete something that when you bump into it, it puts you in contact with a divine reality" (Jeremy Driscoll, OSB).
 - E. Worship—a form of serious play
 - F. Links us to the right praise offered continually by saints and angels in heaven
 - G. Call and response between Christ the Head and his Mystical Body
 - 1. Can be active
 - 2. Importance of silence

Thoughts / Questions:

Lesson 2: Called Out Of The World

Description

For a monastic, whose “work” is to pray the psalms and canticles of the Divine Office throughout the day and evening, nothing much changes between life on earth and life in eternity. A daily engagement with liturgical praise, worship, and prayerful supplication for others simply goes on, from one place to the next. Their lives have periods of work and recreation, and mundane matters do arise, of course. But the largest part of their lives is lived within liturgy, and liturgy brings us into a kind of communion with heaven. This is true within the Liturgy of the Mass, too, as we’ll see as we begin to explore what is happening in the Mass.

Outline

I. CHURCH COMMUNITY

- A. *Ekklesia*: being called out from. The Church is the community that has been called out of the fallen world into a new way of being
- B. Linked with the universal Church in same ritual
- C. Stepping into heaven and communion of saints

II. ENTRANCE PROCESSION

- A. Singing
 - 1. Echo of the celestial song
 - 2. Reflects the harmony of God
- B. Priest acts “in persona Christi capitis”: in the person of Christ, the head
 - 1. People respond “and with your spirit,” acknowledging the priest’s role during Mass as in persona Christi

C. Penitential Act

- 1. We acknowledge our sins
- 2. We ask God for mercy (Kyrie Eleison)

D. Gloria

- 1. Burst of joy for the forgiveness of our sins
- 2. Giving glory to God in the highest produces peace here below

E. Collect

- 1. Collecting or gathering the strands of prayers that have been introduced at this point
- 2. Content of the Collect: Praise God; Remember some great work of God; and ask with confidence that he might do something great for us now (anticipates the Eucharist)
- 3. Always directed to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit

Thoughts / Questions:

What could I pay attention to the next time I attend Holy Mass?

Lesson 3: God Speaks Our Story

Description

How many times in our lives have we had the experience of believing that, on the basis of just a fact or two, we know someone well enough to judge whether we would be interested in knowing them further? It happens frequently in politics, particularly in the United States, which has become so mindlessly tribal in service to ideologies that a single comment on a social media thread, in context or out, is enough to have one quickly labeled, and just as quickly dismissed, as a great many assumptions are made about one's character and intelligence. This rather kneejerk, presumptuous dismissiveness is not limited to politics, of course. We've all had the experience of rejecting a book or film out of hand because someone has labeled it "too-something" before we've really checked it out. We do it when we consider where to live, too. Let someone suggest that a school district has vague, unspecific "problems" and we'll look at the next town over.

Sometimes we even apply Kierkegaard's attributed negation technique to our willingness to study the saints. It's not unusual to hear a Catholic say that he has never read Saint Therese of Lisieux because someone nicknamed "The Little Flower" could have nothing to say to him. Or to hear another say—with absolute certainty, by the way—that she would never read Thomas Merton or Dorothy Day because their ideas were "too modern." Generally, if such folks can be urged to put aside their assumptions and actually engage with what they've been so quick to label and negate, they realize they have judged too rashly.

Something very similar to the examples above actually exists regarding the Mass: minds are made up quickly and liturgies are abandoned by too many, and we all miss out in ways great and small because of it. A willingness to revisit something about which we had already made up our minds can lead to deeper understanding and appreciation. And that deeper appreciation often leads us right into love.

Outline

I. GOD SPEAKS TO US

- A. Through creation
- B. Through the people and events of Israel
- C. Through the Incarnation (Heb 1:1-2)
- D. The Father speaks his Word (the Son) and that Word is interpreted by the Holy Spirit
- E. Speaking our story: Christians are part of the great story of creation, the fall, the formation of Israel, and the coming of the Messiah

II. THE READINGS: "THE WORD OF THE LORD"

- A. Old Testament: Jesus is the climax of the story of Israel
- B. Responsorial Psalm: the Psalms contain practically every combination of human responses to God's activity
- C. Second Reading: from the Letters of the Apostles, which is a clear reminder that the faith of the Church is apostolic, not some vague spirituality

D. The Gospel

1. The joyful climax of the Liturgy of the Word
2. Preceded by “Alleluia”—praise for God
3. Fundamentally about the sacrifice, death, and Resurrection of Jesus
4. Spoken by our King, Christ, through the priest acting in persona Christi
 - a. The priest or deacon’s authority comes from a bishop, a successor of the Apostles
 - b. The Christian faith is not a privately generated, religious philosophy, rather it is the fruit of an apostolic witness

Thoughts / Questions:

How can I hear God's message more deeply during the Liturgy of the Word?

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Lesson 4: Responding to God

Description

Not every priest or deacon may be blessed with oratorical skills outside of the ordinary. A fully equal distribution of giftedness is as rare a thing in ordained clergy as with any of us. Hence, some priests might be terrific confessors but so-so preachers; some deacons might offer an ear-challenging Exsultet at the Easter vigil, but do a dandy job at the pulpit. Either way, most of us can tell when a homilist has really spent some time praying over and preparing his homily and when he is just winging it, and perhaps we must ask ourselves whether our demeanor during the homily encourages or discourages the preacher in his preparations. A homilist's effort—along with our fullest participation and willingness to listen and to hear—really does matter at this very important juncture within the Liturgy of the Word. It is here in the homiletic section of the Mass, with the Creed and the prayers of the faithful immediately following, that the priest (still in persona Christi capitis) is constructing the bridge that helps to transport the assembly from the Word to the Word made Flesh.

Outline

I. HOMILY

- A. Purpose: Take the listeners on a tour of the Biblical world and then show the points of contact between that world and their own
- B. An extension of the readings and hence is Christ speaking to his people
- C. Homily is also God's people speaking back to him. The preacher speaks on behalf of the people, advocating for them to God

D. Correlates the questions of human existence with the answers of divinity

E. Links two major sections of the Mass (Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist); once people have seen how their lives are illumined by the Biblical pattern, they will want to make their lives a living sacrifice of praise to God

II. THE CREED OR PROFESSION OF FAITH

A. Professing belief in the Word of God

B. Declaration of the Christian faith

C. Nicene Creed emphasizes the Divinity of Jesus, along with his humanity

III. PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

A. Petitions that are primarily a response to the Word of God just proclaimed

B. Broad and inclusive; the Church prays for the world

C. The conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word

Thoughts / Questions:

What can I pay more attention to when professing the Creed?

Lesson 5: Preparing for Sacrifice

Description

Bishop Barron reminds us that the goal of our worship in the Mass is a physical and spiritual encounter with the Lord, “the most intense communion with Christ possible as he becomes really, truly, substantially present to us.”

The Liturgy of the Word, where we listened to our King, has brought us to this moment of accessibility. We are about to find ourselves within the presence of the King, but his Majesty is no mere monarch among his subjects—present, yet distant and apart. Rather, we are anticipating a flesh-to-Flesh encounter, a great intimacy with Christ, who is not only King but Bridegroom.

So we bring ourselves more fully into preparation for this great moment through three distinct actions:

- The Preparation of the Gifts
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Rite of Communion

Outline

I. PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

A. Offering of the gifts: bread, wine, water, and usually money

1. The self-offering of the assembly; giving God the best of ourselves
2. A sacrifice—giving part of God’s creation back to him as a sign of love, gratitude, petition, and reverence
3. Indicates the main point of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: in union with Christ’s sacrifice, we sacrifice ourselves to the Father

- B. Berakah prayer: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation . . .”
- C. Cleansing of the priest’s hands
- D. Hinge of the Mass: “Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours . . .”

II. EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

- A. The Preface
 - 1. Series of three exchanges between priest and people
 - 2. Lifting up our hearts to the mountaintop and beyond, to heaven
 - 3. Right and just to give thanks to the Father
- B. The Sanctus: praise in union with the heavenly liturgy
- C. Priest praises God the Father
- D. The First Epiclesis: calling forth the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ—Trinitarian action: “Asking the Father to send the Spirit to make present the Son.”

Thoughts / Questions:

What personal intention and daily sacrifice will I offer during Holy Mass?

Lesson 6: The Real Presence Creates Communion

Description

The Eucharistic moment is unlike any other moment in the worship of Almighty God. Mystics have told us that within the veil that separates heaven from earth, there are “thin places”—places made permeable and penetrable through God’s own desire to be with us. One of the thinnest places in the world is a Catholic Mass at the exact moment of Consecration, when the web is dissolved and Christ is there—the King among his people.

In that moment there comes a profound quietness, a brief instant of peace “beyond all understanding” so authentic, so true, that even children seem to recognize it. At the crackling sense of holiness that accompanies this supernatural event, the cooing babies always go silent, as though they too have become awestruck witnesses to the Reality of Christ.

For all we know, they have, because this moment is reality. Christ has come and there is a feast, and it is an eternal one. The Lord of Hosts is the host, and we are nurtured by his whole and healing food.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. It’s important to understand and appreciate what leads up to and effects this moment.

Outline

I. TRANSUBSTANTIATION

A. Priest's words change from third to first person as he repeats Jesus' words at the institution of the Eucharist: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you."

B. God's word does not describe, it creates

C. Priest elevates host and chalice in an offering of Christ in sacramental form to the Father, which he does not need and which will return to us, enhanced

D. Proclamation of the Mystery of Faith; outside of time—Christ past, present, and future

E. Second Epiclesis: calling down the Spirit to conform us to what we are about to consume

II. INTERCESSIONS FOR THE CHURCH

A. We are linked by virtue of our Baptism to every other person in the world, living and dead, throughout all of time

B. Prayers for Pope, our local bishop, and those in Purgatory

C. Invoke Mary, the Apostles, martyrs, and all the saints

III. THE GREAT DOXOLOGY

A. "Through him, with him and in him . . ."

B. Sacrificial offering of the Son to the Father in the unity of the Spirit to give glory to God

IV. THE LORD'S PRAYER

A. Now configured to Jesus, we can address God as Abba, Father

B. "Thy Kingdom come" has a particular application to the liturgy as the Mass is God's way of being here on earth

C. "Give us this day our daily bread"—super-substantial bread

V. SIGN OF PEACE

A. Only time the priest directly addresses Jesus Christ, who is now present

B. Peace represents everything God wants for his people—everything that has been realized by Christ Jesus

VI. LAMB OF GOD

A. Mass is also a sacred meal; a banquet of God's people in the presence of the Lord

B. God wants to feed his people with his very life

VII. COMMUNION

A. We feed on the Body and Blood of the Lord

B. We become what we eat

C. We are the unified Body of Christ

VIII. DISMISSAL

A. Not meant to stay on God's holy mountain

B. "We are gathered, we are fed, and finally we are sent" back into the world to evangelize

Thoughts / Questions:

How can I more actively participate during this stage of Holy Mass?

"It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without the Holy Mass"

St Padre Pio



**What You Need To Know
About The Catholic Mass**

**- Bishop Barron
(14min)**



**Silence and the Meaning
of the Mass**

**- Bishop Barron
(9min)**



**The Real Presence of
Christ in the Eucharist**

**- Bishop Barron
(11min)**



**The Mystery of
the Mass**

**- Bishop Barron
(58min)**



**Catholic Priest Explains
What Happens At Mass**

**- Augustine Institute
(14min)**



**Every Part Of The Mass
And What It Means**

**- Father Mike Schmitz
(39min)**