

Session 3



WALK THROUGH
THE MASS
EXPLORING THE SACRED LITURGY

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WALK THROUGH THE MASS

Exploring the Sacred Liturgy



LEADER PREPARATION OVERVIEW

From the time of the Apostles, Christians have gathered on Sundays to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Early Christians would read the Scriptures, listen to a homily, and pray prayers of petition. The priest then offered bread and wine, and the people received the Eucharist in Holy Communion. It was the Mass then—and it is the Mass today.

In order to better appreciate the sacred mysteries of the Liturgy, we need to understand how the Mass is arranged and what happens in each of its four basic parts. We then can begin to understand how Christ's one sacrifice on Calvary is made present to us through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. As we do so, we enter more profoundly into the sacred Liturgy and encounter Jesus, present and alive for us today.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Mass we celebrate today links back to apostolic times**
- **The four main sections of the Mass**
- **How we encounter God in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist**
- **What we can do to “get more” out of every Mass**
- **Why we must attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation**

STEP # 1

OPENING PRAYER



SAY: Welcome to this session of *Symbolon*.

Have participants turn to page 23 of their Guide to find the Opening Prayer and discussion questions.

This week we will learn more about the Mass. Let's begin by praying part of the Prayer Before Mass, written by St. Thomas Aquinas.



Almighty and everlasting God,
behold I come to the Sacrament of thine only-begotten Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ:

I come as one infirm to the physician of life,
as one unclean to the fountain of mercy,
as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness,
as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth.
Therefore I implore the abundance of thy measureless bounty
that thou wouldst vouchsafe to heal my infirmity,
wash my uncleanness,
enlighten my blindness,
enrich my poverty
and clothe my nakedness,
that I may receive the Bread of Angels,
the King of kings, the Lord of lords,
with such reverence and humility,
with such sorrow and devotion,
with such purity and faith,
with such purpose and intention
as may be profitable
to my soul's salvation.
Amen.

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Optional)

**Suggested Scripture readings for
a Celebration of the Word of God**

*(see Introduction to Symbolon at
www.SymbolonCatholic.org)*

Revelation 4:4-11

Acts 2:42-47

1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-34

STEP #2

INTRODUCTION



SAY: Each Sunday Catholics gather together to celebrate the Mass, the central act of worship that makes Christ's sacrifice on Calvary present to us. With the entire Church, we enter sacred rites that date back to the time of the Apostles. We learn about God's revelation through Scripture, and then we partake in the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of the Lord in Holy Communion.

In this session we are going to take a walk through the Mass and consider the following important topics:

- **The two main divisions of the Mass and how they make one single act of worship**
- **How the prayers and rituals of the Mass are rooted in Sacred Scripture**
- **Why attending Sunday Mass is more of a privilege than an obligation**
- **Simple things we can do each week to get more out of Mass**

We will start by watching a short video.



DIGGING DEEPER

Communion Fast

Catholics are required to abstain from solid food or drink for one hour before Communion. Water and medicine may be taken any time before reception. The sick and aged are required to fast only fifteen minutes. Originally the Eucharistic fast was from midnight until Communion was received. In 1964 Pope Paul VI established the current norms.

STEP #3

VIDEO PART I: WALK THROUGH THE MASS



Play DVD Part I, which will play for approximately 12 minutes.

STEP #4 PROCLAMATION

After the video has stopped,



SAY: We have just learned how the sacred words and rituals of the Mass go back to the time of the early Church, and how in the Mass God gives himself to us and in return we give our praise back to God.

The Mass consists of four principal parts. The first is the Introductory Rites, where we humbly acknowledge our sins, ask for God's mercy, and prepare our souls for worship with opening prayers.

The second part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Word, where the Word of God is proclaimed through a Scripture reading from the Old Testament, the Responsorial Psalm, a New Testament reading, and a reading from the Gospels.

The third part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In this part, the bread is changed into the Body of Christ and the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ. Christ's sacrifice is made present, and we receive the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Christ in Holy Communion.

The last and final part of the Mass consists of the Concluding Rites. We are sent off to bring Christ into the world after having heard God's Word and been nourished by his Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Finally, the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is an opportunity to give ourselves to the Lord so that he can give himself to us in this most profound, intimate way through the Eucharist.

STEP #5

VIDEO PART II: EXPLORING THE SACRED LITURGY



SAY: In our second video segment, we are going to look at the profound significance of the rites and rituals that make up the Mass.



Play DVD Part II, which will play for approximately 22 minutes.

STEP #6 BREAK

After stopping the video,



SAY: Now let's take a short break. When we come back, we are going to discuss some of the things we learned in this last video segment.

Break should be about 10 minutes.

STEP #7 DISCUSSION

Have participants turn to their Guides to find these questions.



SAY: Welcome back to our walk through the Mass. Let's talk a bit about what we learned in the last video segment.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

What are some examples of words in the Mass that come directly from Scripture? What are some examples that come from the earliest days of the Church?

LEADER'S TIPS:

- One example is "Peace be with you"—words Jesus spoke to his disciples. Another example is the prayer we say before Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. But only say the word and my soul shall be healed." This is taken directly from the Centurion who asked that Jesus heal his servant.
- In the early Church, the priest would say, "The Lord be with you," and the people would respond, "and with your Spirit" just as we do today. The priest would also say, "Lift up your hearts," and the people would respond as we do: "We lift them up to the Lord."

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

In the video presentation, we learned that in the Mass, Christ's sacrifice is made present. In what ways are we called to unite our lives to Christ's sacrifice made present in the Mass?

LEADER'S TIP:

- **We are called to offer our entire lives—all our works, all our joys, all our sufferings—in union with Jesus' perfect offering of himself to the Father (CCC 1368). By participating in the sacrifice of the Mass in this way, we are ever more conformed to Christ's sacrificial love.**



DIGGING DEEPER

Names for the Sacrament

The Eucharist is described by various names, which highlight different aspects of the sacrament. It is referred to as:

- *The Eucharist*, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek word *eucharistein* means “to give thanks.”
- *The Lord's Supper*, because of its connection with the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Mass.
- *The Breaking of the Bread*, because that is what Jesus did at the Last Supper and it is the way his disciples recognized him after the Resurrection. The first Christians often used this term.
- *The Eucharistic Assembly*, because it is celebrated in the assembly of the faithful.
- *The Holy Sacrifice*, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ and includes the Church's offering.
- *The Holy and Divine Liturgy*, because it is the center of the Church's worship.
- *Holy Communion*, because in receiving the Eucharist at Mass we unite ourselves to Christ.
- *Holy Mass*, after the word *mission*, meaning “sending forth” of the faithful to live out God's will in daily life.

(See CCC 1328-1331 for more information.)

STEP # 8 (OPTIONAL) SUMMARY & EXHORTATION

At this point, the facilitator, small group leader, or catechist has the option to give a summary of the main points that have been presented in the video segments. Here are some key points you may want to cover.

- The Mass consists of two great parts that together constitute one single act of worship: the Liturgy of the Word, with Scripture readings, the homily, the Creed and general intercessions; and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the Eucharistic prayer in which Christ's Body and Blood becomes present, and the communion rite (CCC 1346, 1408).
- The Liturgy also has rites at the start of Mass which prepare us for God's Word and Sacrament, and rites at the end of Mass which send us forth into the world. In the Introductory Rites, we gather together to prepare our souls to encounter God in his Word and Jesus in the Eucharist (CCC 1348), while in the Concluding Rites, the faithful are sent forth to bring the good news of salvation to the entire world (CCC 1332).
- Catholics are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days and to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season (CCC 1389, 1417).



STEP #9

CALL TO CONVERSION



SAY: Spend a few moments reflecting on the mystery of the Mass. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Do I come to Mass to receive or to give? What am I doing to prepare my soul for Mass?
2. In the video, we learned some ways to “get more out of the Mass,” including praying in the car on the way to church, listening for a specific point or prayer that particularly touches us, and remaining for a few minutes after Mass to give thanks. What is one thing that you could do this week to prepare for Mass?
3. Reflect on the following quote from St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina:

“It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass.”

Prayerfully consider how St. Padre Pio’s statement expresses the importance of the Mass. How does this change the way you view the “obligation” to attend Mass? How can you more completely give yourself to Jesus at each Mass?



STEP # 10

CLOSING PRAYER



SAY: I hope you take time this week to reflect on the Mass and what it means in your life. Your Guides will give you prompts if you need some guidance.



Let's close our time together today by praying part of St. Thomas Aquinas' Prayer for After Mass.

I give thanks to thee, O Lord,
most holy, Father almighty, eternal God,
that thou hast vouchsafed,
for no merit of mine own,
but out of thy pure mercy,
to appease the hunger of my soul
with the precious body and blood of thy Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Humbly I implore thee,
let not this Holy Communion be to me
an increase of guilt unto my punishment,
but an availing plea unto pardon and salvation.
Amen.



FOR FURTHER READING

For more in-depth reading, see the following *Catechism* passages:

The Mass through the Ages: CCC 1345

The Structure of the Mass: CCC 1346

Introductory Rites: CCC 1348

The Liturgy of the Word: CCC 1349

The Offertory: CCC 1350

The Liturgy of the Eucharist: CCC 1351-1353

Sunday Obligation: CCC 1359, 1417

Other Resources:

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 14

A Biblical Walk Through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy
by Dr. Edward Sri

The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition
by Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina

The Mass of the Early Christians by Mike Aquilina

The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth by Scott Hahn

