

The Mass Deconstructed

A Liturgical Catechesis

Understanding the Introductory Rites

Why do we go to Church?

- Habit or Family tradition
- I need church
- Born a Catholic

We have been invited. My participation in Sunday Mass is nothing more than a response from Jesus to his disciples to gather on “The day of the resurrection...the day of Christians...our day.”

2 purposes of the Introductory Rites:

1. To form us into one people in Christ
2. To dispose our hearts to receive what God is about to give us in word and sacrament.

Christ is present:

- In the assembly, “Where two or three are gathered in my name,”
- The Priest presiding in his person
- His Word proclaimed
- The Blessed Sacrament

We begin with a Procession:

- The Entrance Procession and its song (antiphon) are both designed to weave us together so that we can recognize ourselves as one people, One Body in Christ.

The different liturgical ministers will perform a particular role during the liturgy:

- The Priest will act in the person of Christ, gathering up our prayers and offering them to the Father.
- The Deacon will bring the Gospel to us and will assist in bringing our gifts to God.
- The Lector will proclaim the Sacred Scriptures.
- The Cantor and Choir will help us to sing.
- The Ushers will keep good order.
- The Altar Servers will assist with the practicalities around the altar.
- The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will bring the Body of Christ to the assembly.

Greeting the Altar and the People Gathered Together

- The altar is the primary sign of the presence of Christ, who is the altar and sacrifice, the giver and the gift. The Priest bows to Christ and kisses the altar in a sign of affection, veneration and greeting.
- The Priest's chair in the parish is reserved only for the one who, in the place of the Bishop, is the chief shepherd, teacher and sanctifier of the community.
- In the Sign of the Cross we profess our faith in the Blessed trinity and in our crucified Savior for our whole being belongs to Christ and to his Cross (Baptism).
- Through the Cross of Jesus we are inserted into that life and not only pray but live and move and have our being in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord be with you.

- The origins of the greeting lie in the Old Testament (Ruth and the corn farmers).
- The Annunciation "...the Lord is with you."
- The English salutation, "Good-bye" is originally "God be with ye."

And with your Spirit.

- Like the spirit which God sent down upon the seventy wise men to help Moses to rule the Israelites, like the spirit which God sent upon the sons of Aaron that they might offer sacrifice in the Temple, this spirit is given to every Priest at his ordination that he might offer the sacrifice of Christ in union with the faithful and for their nourishment.
- It is a statement of right relationships, a dialogue between a shepherd and his flock, between Christ and his Priestly People, between the one ordained to act in the person of Christ and the Holy People for and with whom he will offer this holy and living sacrifice.

The Act of Penance

- The Mass is a gathering of like-minded people who are centered on God, from its first to its final moments. It's not who we are that matters, but it is Christ, present to his mystical Body in the person of the priest.
- What matters in this assembly gathered for the worship of God, is not all that we've accomplished, but that we are sinners and that Christ died to save us. We are like the prodigal son, too often concerned with selfishness and sin.

The Act of Contrition

- Part 1 is a confession that I have sinned grievously by acts and omissions through my own fault.
- Part 2 asks the angels and the saints and everyone present to "pray for me to the Lord, our God."
- It is the proclamation of the power of God to forgive my sins.

- It is important to understand that the Prayer of Absolution at Mass does not take the place of the need to confess our sins. Only the Absolution we receive in the Sacrament of Penance takes away our sins definitively.

Kyrie Eleison! Christe Eleison!

- The Kyrie is part of the Act of Penance. The ancient Greek chant is one of the oldest and most treasured prayers of the Catholic Church. It is in the original language of the Gospels.
- The Mass begins by recalling our sins and God's mercy. We realize how blessed we are to have a God who is so rich in mercy!

Sunday Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water

- Holy Water is blessed and sprinkled on the people as a reminder of their Baptism and to keep us faithful to the Spirit Christ has given us.

Other Rites

- Procession of Palms on Palm Sunday.
- Procession of Candles on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.
- The greeting of the body in the Order of Christian Funerals.
- The solemn lighting of the new fire at the Easter Vigil.

The Gloria

- AKA the Greater Doxology or the Angelic Hymn
- The Gloria begins with the song of the angels announcing the birth of Christ and then opens us a hymn of praise to God the Father, and Christ the Lamb of God.
- The opening words ask for two things: Glory to God and peace for us.
- Its purpose: to praise, bless, adore, glorify, and thank God for his great glory.
- The rest of the hymn is addressed to Christ, the Lamb of God.
- We begin, end and celebrate the whole Mass with constant reminders that what we are about is the mercy of God.

The Collect (Opening Prayer)

- It collects the prayers of all who are gathered.
- The priest invites the people, "Let us pray."
- During the period of silence, we offer the intentions dearest to us.
- Once we have remembered what it is that we wish to ask God for, the Priest opens his hands in imitation of Jesus' Cross and a venerable sign of prayer called the *orans* position.
- The priest, acting in the person of Christ begins to pray the Collect prayer in the name of the whole People of God and all who are present.

- The opening lines praise God, the middle lines ask him for something, and the concluding doxology sums up the prayer by praising the Blessed Trinity.

“Amen”

- Amen is probably the most commonly used word in the prayers of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.
- Literally means “so be it” but more than that it is the Amen of the Prophet Isaiah, Jerimiah, and the Book of Revelation.
- Amen expresses a desire that all may be fulfilled as God desires it.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Mass begin?
2. Discuss the greeting of the people and the altar. How do these differ and how are they the same?
3. How do the Acts of Penitence center on the mercy of Christ? Why not just pray for the forgiveness of our sins?
4. Discuss the origins and current use of the Kyrie.
5. In the Collect, why do we pause after the Priest says, “Let us pray”?
6. The “Amen” is the most popular response of the people during Mass. What does it mean and why is it used so often?