

The Mass

The Mass is our most important prayer as Catholic Christians. The Church tells us that celebrating the Mass is the “source and summit” of our Christian life. That means that our prayer at Mass on Sunday gives us strength to do good things the rest of the week! It also means that our prayer at Mass is so important that everything else we do should help us to prepare for it.

The word “Mass” is sort of funny. It came about because in the old days, when all the prayers were in Latin, the last words the priest or deacon said were “Ite, missa est.” It meant, “go, you are sent.” (We still hear these words today – “go in peace.”) The word “missa” came to be used to describe the entire prayer!

There are two other words we use at Mass that are good to know. One is “Eucharist.” The word “Eucharist” in Greek means “thanksgiving.” For us, “Eucharist” means the holy meal of Jesus’ body and blood we receive during the Mass.

Another important word is “liturgy.” The word “liturgy” is also from the Greek language. It means “the work of the people.” Work? Yes, work! Because by participating in the Mass, and understanding it more and more, we can truly “work” for all the good things our world needs: peace, joy, and love.

In the Catholic Church, the Mass is said not only every Sunday, but every single day—many times a day! All over the world, all the time, Christians are gathering to remember Jesus’ gift of himself on the Cross, and to renew that gift by receiving his body and blood in the Eucharist. Why do we repeat these same words over and over, so many times? Why not just once and for all? Think for a minute about some of the words you say over and over each day. Do you ever get tired of hearing your family say, “I love you”? Of course not! Saying “I love you” helps the love to grow. Mass is like that. The more we tell God how we feel, the more our love for God will grow.

The Mass is one great prayer, the greatest prayer the Church can offer to God.



Here is Father Atli. Today it is Sunday. Lots of people are getting ready to come to mass. There are a lot of things to do to before mass starts.



The mass books and hymn books are ready to give to people as they are welcomed at the door.



Mrs Kenny gets everything ready for the 'little church'. The children will use the pencils and paper to make something.



All of the candles need to be lit in the church. Don't they look pretty?



The empty baskets are put at the back of the church. Later they will be passed around the church to collect money.



Mrs Kenny is getting the reading ready. She puts the Bible on the pulpit for Father Atli. She shows Eleanor and Hollie the story.



Now everything is ready for mass to start. Father Atli is now wearing his vestments. He wears these special clothes when he says mass.

The entrance procession is led by the cross. Candles are carried with the cross because it is a sign of Jesus' presence. For the same reason, candles are lit around the altar and carried with the Gospel book and the icon.

During the entrance procession, the priest kisses the altar. It is a sign of special reverence for the presence of Christ in our midst.

The altar servers are ready. They also wear special clothes. They walk with Father Atli in the procession.





Everyone joins in with the first hymn. Mr Hancock sings in the choir. Can you see the organ behind him?



Father Atli welcomes everyone to the mass. He says, 'Welcome to our Sunday celebration,' to the people in church.

We begin Mass with the Sign of the Cross, and two special prayers: the Penitential Rite and the Gloria. In the Penitential Rite, we say "I am sorry" to God. Then, in the Gloria, we sing, "we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory!" The Gloria is the same song the angels sang on Christmas night when Jesus was born.



Father Atli invites the children into the little church. Mrs Hancock is telling them a story about Jesus. Then they are going to make a candle to show Father Atli.



Charlie is preparing a special prayer in the 'little church. He will read it out to everyone during mass.

When the children are in 'Little Church' the grown ups listen to the readings. There is a reading from the Old Testament, a responsorial psalm, and a New Testament reading. Our faith teaches us that "Christ himself speaks when the scriptures are proclaimed in the Church." Christ himself is speaking--so listen hard everyone!

The homily is part of the Liturgy of the Word. In it the priest "breaks open" the word, and shows us how the readings connect to our daily lives as Christians. The homily makes you think hard about the word of God. Sometimes the preacher will even tell a funny story... then it's OK to laugh! After the homily we all pray in silence for a few moments before standing to join in the profession of our faith, the creed.

After the Liturgy of the Word comes the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the heart of the Mass. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we remember what Jesus did on the night before he died: he took bread and wine, gave them to his disciples, and said, "This is my body; this is my blood." The bread and wine, as well as the people's gifts of money, are brought forward to the altar first.



Caitlin and Eve are going to carry the bread and wine up to Father Atli.



Abigail is going to carry the money that has been collected during mass. That is a very important job too.

The altar is prepared with the Sacramentary, the book that includes all the prayers for the Mass. Though it is translated into many different languages, these prayers are the same in every Catholic Church throughout the world! The servers also place a white "corporal" on the altar. It's like a tablecloth for this holy meal. The "chalice" and "purificator" or napkin are also placed on the altar.



The priest washes his hands before he prays the Eucharistic Prayer. He says to himself, "Lord, wash away my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins."



Father Atli blesses the bread and wine during the mass.

When he says the words, "This is my body," our faith tells us that Jesus truly becomes present in the simple signs of bread and wine. An amazing change has taken place. The priest holds the consecrated host high for all to see. Servers ring bells to bring special attention to this moment.



When we receive communion, we profess our faith that Jesus is really coming to us in this sacrament. The minister says, "The body of Christ," "The blood of Christ." We respond "Amen," which is our way of saying, "Yes, I believe!"



At the end of mass, Father Atli says, 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.' Everyone at mass has enjoyed the celebration

. Now it is time to tidy everything away!