

THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part One: Procession and Introductory Rite

RITE = the prescribed (by the Church) words and actions about how the Sacraments, including Mass, are to be celebrated.

Note: Catholic Christians do not “make up” worship nor are we left to rely on the whim of pastors and others to create and innovate the Church’s Sunday prayer, but instead take to heart Jesus’ command to, “Do this in memory of me.” (Luke 22:19). The “this” is *saying and doing what Jesus sets as the standard* for Christian worship at the Last Supper, the first Mass.

Separately, several of the *Letters of St. Paul* and also *the Acts of the Apostles* provide clear Scriptural evidence that this is exactly how the earliest Christians understood common prayer.

Procession

- Both Old Testament and New Testament processions signal God’s preparing to act for the good of the assembled community.
- Symbolic reminder of our spiritual journey to God. As the priest (and deacon) make their way to the altar, so are we every seeking to draw closer to God’s “throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).
- Unifies the assembled community, focusing our attention to the task at hand; namely, to encounter the Living God in word (Scriptures) and action (Eucharist).

Sign of the Cross

- Identifies us as belonging to the One True God Who graciously reveals Himself as He is as an eternal procession of relations Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Prayer of blessing, invoking God’s assistance and to protect us.
- Invites God into our lives and into our prayer (Mass)

TIP: Always make the Sign of the Cross with careful attention, reverence and intentionality.

Greeting

- *Priest: The Lord be with you* = echoing the recorded greetings of St. Paul and earliest Christians, we also recall the ultimate truth that God summons us to mission of advancing His Kingdom in our prayer (Mass) and daily living.
- *People: And with your spirit* = we acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s unique activity through the ordained priest (and deacon) throughout the Mass. It is as if the people say to the priest (and deacon at the Gospel), we sincerely ask you to do what you have been authorized through ordination to do for us – please, make it happen.

Penitential Rite

- Throughout the Scriptures, whenever the people dared to approach the Living God they remembered to take time to prepare carefully for their holy encounter.
- In both Old and New Testaments, the practice of acknowledging one’s sins as an act of repentance; that is, “to turn in a different direction”, by turning to God as we truly are always in need of divine mercy.
- Like the wayward son suffering in his misery [read: disconnection from his father], we humbly repent and return home to our Heavenly Father.

Gloria [*Glory to God*]

- The feel of our prayer pivots from humble repentance and need for divine mercy to joyful praise. It is our joyful response to our pleading for mercy
- The opening words first sung by the angels over the fields of Bethlehem, announcing to the shepherds and through them to the world the good news of Christ's birth . (Luke 1:14)
- We jubilantly express our gratitude for having been rescued by Christ Jesus from our captivity to sin and death.

Collect [*Opening Prayer*]

- The priest announces, "Let Us Pray".
- A brief period of silence follows, enabling everyone to call to mind the intentions that each of us brings to Mass.
- The priest is "collect-ing" the thoughts and prayers of each and every one of us, who have been "collect-ed" from our homes for this celebration of Mass and helping us to focus our worship into one prayer, enabling us to encounter the Living God.

And so concludes the *Introductory Rite*.