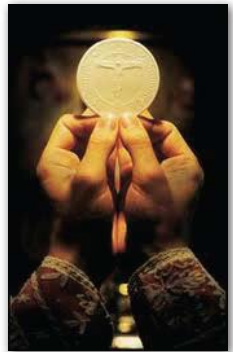


# ENTERING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY MASS

**Christ's Body "is given up for you" and Blood "is poured out for you" (cf. Luke 22:19-20).**



*“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”  
Matthew 4:4 ’*

## **Preparation before Mass**

***Mass is the highest form of worship for Catholics.*** We prepare our heart before Mass: brief examination of conscience, Act of Contrition and pray for the grace to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion worthily: *Heavenly Father, I offer You all the precious Wounds of Jesus, the pains and agonies of His most Sacred Heart and His most precious Blood in atonement for all our sins and for the grace to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion worthily.*

With generosity, we let go of unforgiveness, ill-feelings in our heart. *“If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24).*

We empty ourselves and leave all distractions outside the church. We come into church conscious only of our love and need for the Lord in our heart. We understand that Jesus is present in fullness in the Eucharist in the church's tabernacle. Thus, the church is a holy place. We have a proper, reverential attitude. We worship the Lord in holy attire. In humility, we remind ourselves of our nothingness before Almighty God.

Mastering our senses, we put ourselves into the loving presence of God. We put all our love, devotion and attention into Mass. We try attending the Mass as if it were our last! We hang on to every word of the prayers. We sing the hymns as if we were the only ones singing before God. We attend Mass with an undivided heart for God.

## Liturgy of the Word

God feeds us spiritually through His Word and Eucharist. We listen to God's Word with the simple faith of a child, remembering that with God, everything is possible. Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children..." (Luke 10:21).

The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:130).

To grow spiritually into the likeness of Christ, we receive, assimilate and absorb God's Word into our being so that it will become part of our lives (see 'the wise and foolish builders' - Matthew 7:24-27).

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

"When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your Name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jeremiah 15:16).

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

As gifts of bread and wine are brought up, we pray to our guardian angel to also present our personal intentions and place them on the altar. What is the most pressing intention that I am lifting up to God during this Mass?

We unite Christ's Sacrifice of His crucified Body on the Cross with our own holy and living sacrifice of our entire being and life (sufferings and joys, past, present and future), sanctified by His Precious Blood. What is the most special offering of myself that I am uniting with Christ's Sacrifice during this Mass? It could be something that happened to me recently.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1).

Our lives become united to Christ's life and will become more meritorious in God's eyes.

At the Last Supper Jesus said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15).

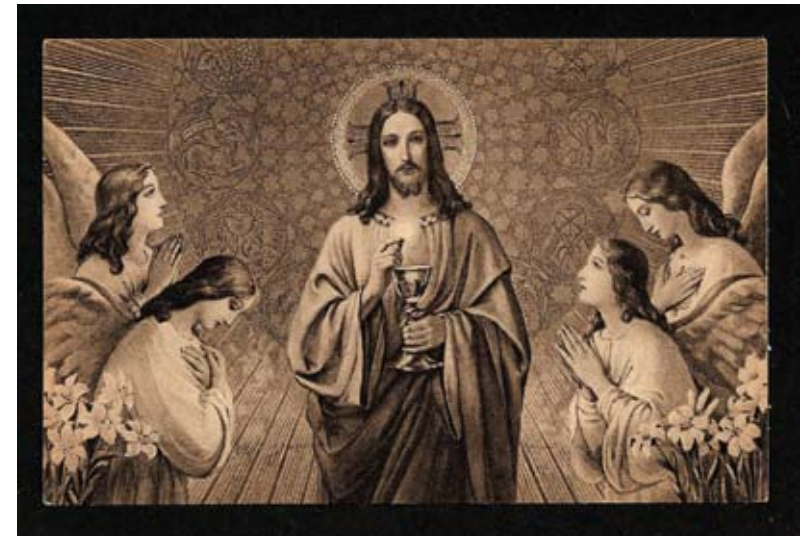
## The Commissioning to go Forth

We recall Jesus' last great commissioning to His disciples (including us!) before He ascended into heaven:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. I will be with you till the end of time." Matthew 28:18-20.

We receive the same commissioning from the priest at end of Mass: "The Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve God." Nourished and built up through God's Word and Eucharist, and living a new life in the Lord, we are commissioned to go out into the world to build up God's Kingdom through the spread of the Good News of Jesus. Christ depends on us to do this. This is the way Christ's Kingdom is built up on earth – through you and me.

*(For a deeper insight into Mass, please read Encyclical Letter "Ecclesia De Eucharistia" of Pope John Paul II – On the Eucharist and its Relationship to the Church).*



## **In communion with the Saints**

When we receive Holy Communion, we are in communion with Christ and with the whole Church: saints in heaven (Triumphant Church), faithful on earth (Militant Church) and holy souls in purgatory (Suffering Church). Through Mass and especially during Holy Communion, we are one in Christ in worship, adoration and thanksgiving to God, the Father, making our lives like Christ's: meritorious and redemptive in value. The Mass is truly a unique and very special event that every Catholic should feel very privileged to be part of.

St. Gregory: "The heavens open and multitudes of angels come to assist at the Holy Sacrifice (Mass)".

St. Augustine: "The angels surround and help the priest when he is celebrating Mass."

St. John Chrysostom: "When Mass is being celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels, who adore the Divine Victim immolated on the altar."

## **Mother Mary, Mother of the Eucharist**

Just as Mary stood at the foot of the Cross when Jesus died, She stands near the altar at every Mass. As we unite our hearts with Jesus's, we remember with love how our Blessed Mother made it all possible for us.

## **What we receive from Holy Mass**

We cannot offer God anything more valuable or pleasing than Mass for we are offering Jesus Himself. How much graces we can get out of Mass depends on our heart – the love and devotion with which we participate in Mass. God can only give to us to the degree we can receive. The greater the grace, the more open the state of the heart and soul have to be. Depending on the openness of our heart, Mass can transform, heal and empower us in our personal spiritual journey.

The Last Supper was not just a meal but significantly, also the Sacrifice of Jesus in anticipation of the completion of His Sacrifice on Calvary. That was why Jesus eagerly looked forward to this meal.

In recollection and love, we enter into the Spirit of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. We share the sorrow of Christ as He sweated blood in anguish. In the olden days some priests had a cotton handkerchief up their sleeves to wipe tears of love when they entered into the Spirit of our Crucified Lord. We let our spirits be caught up in this great mystery of love! We open up our souls to and rejoice in the grandeur and majesty of God.

At the Consecration during Mass, in our heart, in union with Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph and in the Holy Spirit, we consecrate to God the entire world to implore God's mercy on the entire world, so much in need of God's mercy in these crucial times.

At the elevation of the consecrated Host, the crucified Body of Jesus (now under the external appearances of bread and wine) is once again lifted up to the Heavenly Father as a Sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is reliving again, in a mystical way, all the pains and agonies of His crucifixion and death. We fix our eyes on the elevated Host with love and tenderness with the heart-felt prayer: My Lord and My God! We fill our hearts with love for Jesus as we recall all His pains and sufferings. Through His own Blood, Sweat and Tears, Jesus has given His all for us: Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13).

## **The Mass and Christ's Sacrifice on Mount Calvary are one single sacrifice**

The Mass is a perpetuation of Christ's Supreme Sacrifice on Mt Calvary. The Mass is not just a mere reminder but a sacramental re-presentation, re-offering of Christ's dying on the Cross to the Heavenly Father.

St. John Chrysostom puts it well: "We always offer the same Lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one."

Christ's Body "is given up for you" and Blood "is poured out for you" (cf. Luke 22:19-20).

Attending Mass is like standing at the foot of the Cross together with Mother Mary and St. John when Jesus died. Through the institution of the Mass, Jesus gives each faithful follower throughout time the grace and opportunity to participate in His Supreme Sacrifice on Calvary, transcending time and space through the mighty Hand of God. What a gift!

The Mass is also a Sacramental Banquet. The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Christ offers Himself as our spiritual nourishment. When for the first time Jesus spoke of this food, His listeners were astounded and bewildered which forced the Master to emphasize the objective truth of His words: Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life within you (John 6:53). His next words: My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink (John 6:55) clarifies that He is not speaking metaphorically but in the literal sense of the words.

### Receiving Holy Communion in a State of Grace

Holy Communion must be made in a state of grace. Catechism of the Catholic Church stipulates that "anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before coming to Communion" (CCC 1385).

St. Paul reminds us:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30.)

St John Chrysostom exhorted the faithful: I too raise my voice, I beseech, beg and implore that no one draw near to this sacred table with a sullied and corrupt conscience. Such an act, in fact, can never be called 'communion' not even were we to touch the Lord's Body a thousand times over, but 'condemnation', 'torment' and 'increase of punishment.'

It is significant that Jesus washed the feet of the apostles before the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. We exercise diligent care to receive our Lord in Holy Communion in a state of grace. Otherwise, we do great harm to our soul!

When we receive Holy Communion, we receive along with Jesus, God the Father and their Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Each is a distinct, separate person although the three are always united.



Jesus said, My Father and I are one. (John 10:30). ..Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... (John 14:9).

We receive our Lord as if a slave receives her king with great love and humility. We thank and adore each person of the Blessed Trinity. We ask help to adore our Lord more profoundly from Mother Mary whose love and adoration of the Lord exceeds the love and adoration of all the saints and angels put together.

To St. Augustine, Christ said about Holy Communion, "You will not change Me into yourself as you will do so with ordinary bread, but you will be changed into Me."

St. John Vianney said, "There is nothing so great, my children, as the Eucharist. If you were to put all the good actions in the world against a Communion well made, it would be like a grain of dust against a mountain."