

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

What is the Mass?

The Mass is the most important thing that happens anywhere. It is a mystical and actual participation in the offering of the Son to the Father for the salvation of the world. As the priest confects (makes present) the Eucharist, we unite our intention to his, and offer all we have and all we are to the Father.

Why do we need the Mass?

We need the Mass because we need some concrete way to get the antidote to eternal death. Choosing to do evil (commit sin) kills us. We're quite literally choosing against Life itself (God). Death isn't an arbitrary punishment for breaking an arbitrary rule, it's the automatic consequence of our sinful choices. A consequence so powerful that there is no way for us to overcome it on our own. It was only through the Son's choice to take that consequence upon Himself and destroy its power from within that we are able to enter into eternal life. The Mass is the anti-death power of His Cross brought into time and space for us. It's all of Jesus' power over sin and death and hell and Satan condensed down into the appearance of bread and wine. That's what we consume when we come to Mass—the antidote to eternal death.

Why do 67% of Catholics in the U.S. not believe in the Eucharist?

Simply put, because the Catholic faith has not been properly passed on to them. The Church has experienced times of great faithfulness and times of great unfaithfulness. This time, our time, is one of great unfaithfulness. The Catholic Church contains within Her many people who have been sacramentalized—they have received the sacraments, e.g. baptism, confirmation, marriage—but have never actually made the choice to *be* Catholic. They don't have a particular love for Jesus nor do they want to live for Him. They're not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to be virtuous and they think everyone is going to Heaven no matter what. They claim, with the secular world, that there is no such thing as objective truth. They are *in* the Church, but they know nothing *of* the Church or Her Lord. The reason so many Catholics do not believe in the Eucharist is because, while purporting to be “raised Catholic” or having gone to Catholic schools, they have never actually believed in or lived the Catholic faith a day in their lives.

What can the 33% of Catholics who believe in Eucharist do to help?

If the Eucharist really is the antidote to eternal death, and the Mass really is the place where we receive it, then going to Mass is not like going to work or school or the store or anywhere else. It's a different place, and in that place, we act differently. With our **reverence** for the Liturgy and the **precision** with which we participate, we can show the world and our fellow non-practicing Catholics that the Mass is real, that Jesus is real, and that more than anything, He wants to save us. Fidelity in small matters leads to fidelity in great matters, and infidelity in small matters leads to infidelity in great matters.

How do we worship with reverence and precision in the Mass?

By doing and saying what the Church Herself asks us to do and say. We add nothing to the Mass, and we take nothing away from it. The Mass is an ancient ritual, born in the mind of God and formed through the centuries by humans led by the Holy Spirit. It is our honor and privilege to drink the water of eternal life from a fountain so carefully crafted. Thus, it is a beautiful responsibility to memorize every liturgical word and action that concretizes our love of God in the Mass.

Where do I find the words and actions of the Mass?

In the St. Patrick Catholic Church Missalette. Until you are comfortable working from memory, please use this missalette every time you attend Mass. It will easily guide you through every step in three languages—English, Spanish, and Latin. Please also refer to the “refresher” documents in this packet—Vocalization During Mass, Actions Before, During, & After Mass, and Reception of Holy Communion.

Vocalization During Mass

What Do We Say? (and Not Say)

- **4 Guiding Theological/Liturgical Principles**
 - **Principle 1:** If the Mass is real, it changes how we speak.
 - **Principle 2:** We neither add, nor subtract, from the Mass.
 - **Principle 3:** Not everything the priest says the congregation says, and vice versa.
 - **Principle 4:** Stillness and silence wordlessly communicate sacredness.
- **The “How” of What Is Vocalized**
 - **With Reverence**
 - From the heart, really think about what you’re saying and who you’re saying it to
 - **With Precision**
 - Volume: Regular volume, not louder than anyone else
 - Cadence: Unified and together, not faster or slower than anyone else
 - Content: Neither adding nor subtracting from the text of the Mass
 - Singing: On key, quietly or in the heart
- **Memorization & Language**
 - All Catholics should have the entire Mass memorized, including when all actions occur and why.
 - In the United States it is encouraged that Catholics are able to participate in the Mass in three languages—Latin, English and Spanish.
- **What Do We Say During Mass?**
 - “Amen”
 - “And with your spirit”
 - The Confiteor (“I confess...”)
 - The Kyrie (“Lord/Christ/Lord have mercy”)
 - The Gloria
 - “Thanks be to God” (end of readings, end of Mass)
 - The Responsorial Psalm (between first and second readings)
 - “Glory to You, O Lord” (beginning of Gospel)
 - “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ” (end of Gospel)
 - The Creed
 - “Lord, hear our prayer” (following each prayer of the faithful)
 - “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands...”
 - “We lift them up to the Lord”
 - “It is right and just”
 - The Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy...”)
 - The Mysterium (Mystery of Faith; 3 options)
 - The Lord’s Prayer (“Our Father...”)
 - Agnus Dei (“Lamb of God...”)
 - “Lord, I am not worthy...”
 - Bonus: St. Michael the Archangel Prayer (pg. 29–31)
 - Bonus: Seasonal Marian Antiphon
- **What do we not say during Mass?**
 - Anything else (“neither add nor subtract”)

Actions Before, During, and After Mass

What Do We do? (and Not Do)

- **4 Guiding Theological/Liturgical Principles**
 - **Principle 1:** If the Mass is real, it changes how we act.
 - **Principle 2:** We neither add, nor subtract, from the Mass.
 - **Principle 3:** Not everything the priest does the congregation does, and vice versa.
 - **Principle 4:** Stillness and silence wordlessly communicate sacredness.
- **Timing**
 - Arrive at the church with ample time to prayerfully prepare oneself to participate in the Mass.
 - Occasional lateness cannot be avoided, e.g. traffic, a sick child, etc., but habitual lateness should be avoided at all costs. Per Church law, any person who has not arrived at Mass by the beginning of the Gospel has not fulfilled their Sunday obligation and may not receive Holy Communion at that Mass. They are obliged to attend a later Mass at which they may fully participate.
- **General Comportment**
 - The priest, like the congregation, adheres to a certain “standard of movement” while at Mass. The fact that the Mass is an execution of an ancient ritual changes how and when we move our bodies. This coordinated outward expression of worship shows both adoration to God and intentional unity with our fellow parishioners.
- **Dress**
 - Our clothing choice should be somewhere above casual. We humans dress ourselves in direct correlation to our conception of the importance of an event, e.g. one dresses differently for a wedding than to go to the mall. Try to wear clothes (and dress children) in a way that says “I think this is the most important thing that happens anywhere.”
- **General Liturgical Movement**
 - Genuflect on the *right* knee, sit, stand, make the sign of the Cross, strike breast (three times, open hand), make the sign of the Cross on your forehead, lips, and breast with your right thumb, bow (at the waist), kneel, and walk.
- **Things to Avoid**
 - **Leaving Mass**
 - Once seated, please do not leave except in cases of absolute necessity. If one must leave, please do so **during the homily**.
 - **Movement During the Eucharistic Prayer**
 - All kneel for the entirety of the Eucharistic Prayer regardless of where you are in the church, i.e. one’s pew, the entrance, the back of the church, in the hall (if simulcast). Please never leave, move, walk around, or stand during the Eucharistic Prayer. This is the pinnacle of the Mass during which Jesus Himself becomes present. Only the priest and deacon are permitted to stand during this part of the Mass. This practice is a powerful witness to our belief that Jesus is divine.
 - **Hand Movements**
 - Holding hands, shaking hands, moving one's hands toward the priest while saying “and with your spirit,” mimicking the *orans* position of the priest’s hands (held out at one’s sides) or any other hand movement is not a prescribed part of the Mass and thus constitutes a personal addition (“neither add nor subtract”). One may of course move one’s hand however they wish during private prayer outside the Mass.
 - The “sign of peace” is indefinitely suspended. Please bring the energy and desire to greet your fellow parishioners to coffee and donuts in the parish hall after Mass.
 - **Ambient Sound**
 - Children
 - In churches without “cry rooms,” one’s discretion must determine the appropriate action to take when a child is crying or making noise. In general, if the action or noise

is loud enough to distract the parent from the Mass, it is the same for fellow parishioners. Please consider taking unconsolable or overly talkative children to the parish hall until ready to return.

- Toys
 - Please bring only toys that are not designed to make noise. Please avoid hard objects, rattles, toys with flashing lights, or electronic sounds, etc.
- Food
 - Food should be avoided during Mass. Adults are obligated to fast at least one hour before Mass. Please feed children in the car and/or after Mass. If food must be given to a child please transfer food to softer sandwich bags.
- Conversations in the Church
 - Before and after Mass total silence should be observed in the church itself. This offers time for quiet preparation and reflection on the incredible spiritual reality in which we participate. Please have all conversations outside of the church or in the parish hall.

The Reception of Holy Communion

What is the Eucharist?

- The Eucharist is the antidote to death itself. It is the unbloody, crucified and resurrected flesh of Jesus Christ. It is not a symbol pointing us to Christ. It is Christ Himself manifested bodily amongst us.

How can the Eucharist be real?

- Jesus Christ is divine. He is power itself. If He commands something to become something else, it must obey Him. The stone becomes gold, the sick become healed, the bread and wine become His Flesh and Blood. He willfully transferred this power to turn bread and wine into His own self to twelve men we call “Apostles.” He in turn gave these Apostles the ability to transfer this power to other men upon whom they laid their hands. These are the bishops and priests of our day, descended from an ancient line of ordained servants of God. The Eucharist is real because Christ Himself acts with, in, and through the priest or bishop when he whispers the words “this is My Body...this is My Blood.” It is God Himself who alters the substantial nature of these materials so that we might regularly meet Him face to face.

How should we receive the Eucharist?

- **In Spirit**
 - To mingle the Body and Blood of Jesus with our serious sins is itself a serious matter. Jesus is Goodness itself, Mercy itself, and Love itself. But He is also fairness itself and justice itself. When we come before Him, He cannot lie, He must act in perfect accord with what is objectively true. He *is* the Truth. Therefore, if we willfully receive the Eucharist in a state of serious (mortal) sin, He manifests as He must, as Judge. We are found guilty of willfully choosing the evil we have done and for smearing that evil on His buffeted and gentle face. If we are in doubt of being in a state of mortal sin or if we have not gone to confession for more than a year (the minimum to be considered a practicing Catholic) it is always better to abstain from receiving Holy Communion and instead make an act of spiritual communion until we can be reconciled to God in the Sacrament of Penance (confession).
- **In Body**
 - **The Universal Norm**
 - The universal norm for the reception of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church is kneeling and on the tongue. In the United States, one is permitted to receive standing and in the hand if one chooses. At St. Patrick’s, we seek to show as much reverence for the Real Presence as possible and thus we distribute Holy Communion at the altar rail. You are kindly asked to kneel at the altar rail while receiving unless you are physically unable. It is strongly

recommended that you receive on the tongue so as not to inadvertently discard any particles of the Eucharist via the hand.

○ **The Steps to Receiving Communion**

- **Step 1:** Form two lines in the center aisle of the church.
- **Step 2:** Fill in and kneel at the altar rail when you reach the sanctuary (four people on each side of the pillars, 16 people at the rail total).
- **Step 3:** When the priest approaches you and says “The Body of Christ,” respond by audibly saying “Amen.” If you do not say “Amen” you will not be given Holy Communion until you verbally confirm that you are Catholic. Those accustomed to attending the Traditional Latin Mass, note that the priest does not say “Amen” for you in the *Novus Ordo*, it is your responsibility to do so.
- **Step 4:** Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue. Your tongue must pass the edge of your bottom teeth for the priest to avoid touching your tongue. Remain perfectly still while the Host is placed on your tongue.
- **Step 5:** Once you have received, stand up and return to your seat. Someone will fill your spot at the altar rail when you do.
- **Step 6:** Once back at your seat, contemplate the mystery of the Eucharist, speak to Jesus tenderly, ask Him for your needs and for the ability to use the grace of this Holy Communion to do His perfect will in your life. Pray that you, your family, and your fellow parishioners are welcomed into Heaven.