



A Very Simple Guide to the Catholic Mass

Text from the Third Edition of the *Roman Missal*

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Excerpts from the Third Edition of *The Roman Missal*
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Introduction

Are you about to attend a Catholic Mass for the first time? Maybe you haven't been to Mass for a long time and can't remember what to do. Well, guess what, there's been some changes to the Mass, so you're in the same boat as everyone else. Like everyone else, you need to learn how the new English translation of the Mass goes, so I've written this guide just for you.

Whether you're going to Mass for the first time, haven't been for a long time, or have been going very regularly, it's wonderful that you're attending Mass. To help you enjoy and understand the Mass, without looking like you don't know what you're doing, I'm going to give you a play-by-play of what's said and what's going on. I get into a few details, but I can't go into everything without this booklet getting too long.

First of all, you may be wondering why the Mass has changed. The Mass really hasn't changed much since the early 70s. What has changed is the English translation to reflect more accurately the Latin text. The Latin text I'm referring to is not the Latin Mass that was said before the 70s, but the new Mass of the 70s. It was written in Latin, and then translated into all the different languages throughout the world. It's this translating that has been redone, and now we have to relearn the English Mass.

By the way, the Latin Mass that was said before the 1970s is called the "Tridentine Mass" because it was part of the liturgical reform of the Council of Trent in the 16th century. (It's sometimes referred to as the "Traditional Latin Mass.") The new Mass is called the "Novus Ordo" (see, it really is Latin), and it came out of the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. The new Mass is adapted from the Tridentine Mass. If you get an opportunity to go to a Tridentine Mass, I highly recommend it to get a better appreciation of the new Mass.

Since Latin is still the official language of the Roman Church and the original text of the new Mass is written in Latin, it's good to know how to say, or better yet chant, some parts of the Mass in Latin. In fact, the Second Vatican Council mandates "that the faithful can say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass that concerns them."¹ For this reason, I'm going to give you some of the Latin text in this guide.

Another Mass I highly recommend is the Mass of the Eastern Churches; although, they don't call it "Mass," but "Divine Liturgy." If you go to a Divine Liturgy in an Eastern Catholic church, you can receive Communion and it satisfies your Sunday obligation. However, if you go to a Divine

¹ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 54

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Liturgy in an Eastern Orthodox church, you should not receive Communion because, although all their sacraments are valid and the liturgy is identical, we are not yet in full communion with each other.

Some of the new translation of the English Roman Mass is similar to the English translation of the Eastern Divine Liturgy. The Eastern Churches have always had Divine Liturgy in the language of the people (technically call the "vernacular"), while the Roman Church has only had Mass in the vernacular since the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the 60s. Occasionally, I'll mention the Eastern Churches in this guide.

While I'm making recommendations, if you have an opportunity to go to a Jewish synagogue service, it also gives a better appreciation of the Mass. After all, Catholicism and the Mass are really just the fulfilment of the Jewish religion and an adaptation of the synagogue service. Needless to say, this wouldn't fulfill your Sunday obligation, so if you go to a synagogue Saturday morning, you still have to go to church on Sunday.

I've mentioned the "Sunday obligation" a couple of times now. You may not know this, but Catholics are required to go to Sunday Mass every week "unless excused for a serious reason."² A Sunday Mass can be said on a Saturday evening as well as on a Sunday, and attending either one will fulfil your Sunday obligation. However, a Mass on a Saturday morning or afternoon will not be a Sunday Mass but a weekday Mass and will not fulfil your Sunday obligation. It's up to your local bishop as to how early in the day a Sunday Mass can be said on a Saturday, but usually it's around 5:00 pm. If you didn't know this, don't worry; just start going to Sunday Mass.

Did you catch that part about "weekday Mass"? There's Mass on weekdays too. They're similar to Sunday Masses except they usually don't have a second reading, and some parts are optional; like the homily.

Another thing you may not know is that you're supposed to fast for an hour before receiving Communion.³ This fast consists of not eating and drinking anything except water and medicine. Eastern Christians have to fast even longer. Their fast starts an hour before the beginning of Divine Liturgy. I heard an Eastern priest joke during a homily once that if they had the same fasting rule as the Roman Church, they could probably bring a sandwich to Divine Liturgy and eat it as Divine Liturgy starts because Divine Liturgy is so long.

I'm starting to give too much detail now, and I really want to keep this booklet as short as possible. However to keep you fully aware of what's

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2181

³ *Code of Canon Law* 919 §1

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going on, most of the words the priest or a helper says are given, and all the words you'll have to say are given.

Words like this are what the priest or a helper says.

Words like this are what you and everyone else says.

Sometimes the priest mumbles to himself. He's supposed to do this. Sometimes the priest is supposed to say things "inaudibly." Some priests say it in their head, some mumble, and some say it just loud enough to hear. I'm also going to give you these words to you in this guide.

I mentioned that there are people helping the priest during Mass. One of these helpers can possibly be a deacon. A deacon can do some of the things a priest can do, but not everything a priest can do. You can tell the difference between a priest and a deacon by the way they wear their stole. The stole is the strip of fabric that a priest wears around the back of his neck and hangs down the front. A deacon also wears a stole, but he wears it over his left shoulder drawn diagonally across his chest and fastened at his right hip.

Now, on with the guide...

Entering a Catholic Church

The first thing you'll see people doing is dipping their finger in some water and then crossing themselves. This water has been blessed by a priest or deacon, and is called "holy water." When people bless themselves with holy water, they are remembering their baptism.

Making the sign of the cross is done quite often by Catholics, so you should make sure you know how to do this. First, you touch your forehead with a finger of your right hand, saying, "In the name of the Father," then touch your lower chest, saying, "the Son," next touch your left shoulder, saying, "and the Holy," and finally touch your right shoulder, saying, "Spirit." Whenever you hear the priest say, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," everyone crosses themselves. The priest doesn't always cross himself, but sometimes makes the sign of the cross in the air, several inches in front of him. When he does this, he's blessing everyone, and you simply cross yourself.

If you go to an Eastern church, you'll notice they cross themselves from right to left instead of left to right. This is actually the older tradition, and we don't really know why it changed in the Roman Church; although there are a few theories. As well, Eastern Christians cross themselves every time the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned, and they're mentioned quite often in the Divine Liturgy.

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

Before everyone takes their seats, you'll usually see them bow, dip their knees a bit, and some even bounce a knee off the floor. This is one gesture that many Catholics do without knowing why they're doing it or how to do it properly. What they're doing (or should be doing) is called "genuflecting." The correct way to do it is by touching your right knee to the floor. You genuflect because the Real Presence of Christ is present in the tabernacle, and genuflecting is an act of adoration to His Real Presence.

The basic idea is that you bow to the altar, and genuflect to the tabernacle. The tabernacle is a locked box where the Body of Christ is kept for adoration and in reserve to give to the sick that can't attend Mass. Most newer or renovated churches have the tabernacle off to the side or in another room, and you can usually find it by looking for a red light that looks important. In older churches, the tabernacle is right in front of everything. If the tabernacle is in front of you, genuflect to it, otherwise, just bow to the altar.

Remember, whenever you're walking around the church and you pass in front of the tabernacle, genuflect to it. As well, whenever you pass in front of the altar, bow to it.

Genuflecting is a Roman thing. Eastern Christians bow and make the sign of the cross when they pass in front of the tabernacle. As well, the tabernacle is always on the main altar in Eastern churches. Genuflecting is basically momentarily kneeling, and in the East, kneeling is an act of penance. In the West, kneeling can be an act of penance, but it can also be an act of adoration, which is what genuflecting to the tabernacle is all about.

Not everyone is able to genuflect due to health issues. If you're unable to genuflect, you can make a profound bow, that is, a bow from the waist. If you're unable to make a profound bow, you can just bow your head. And, if you're unable to bow your head, you can simply lower your eyes. Do whatever you can to make a sign of reverence and adoration.

Before Mass starts, you'll see some people kneeling. They're simply getting ready for Mass by praying. You can either sit or kneel as you pray.

During this time before Mass starts, you should remain silent as others pray. This silence should be observed "in the [main part of the] church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas."⁴ The only exception to this silence is if those performing music ministry practice the response to the Psalm with the congregation.

⁴ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 45

THE ORDER OF MASS WITH A CONGREGATION

INTRODUCTORY RITES

ENTRANCE SONG

To start the Mass off, the priest and the helpers walk slowly to the altar, while everyone else stands. Usually a song is sung at this time. The priest and the helpers bow to the altar, and then take their spots. The priest and deacon will also go behind the altar and kiss it (he's not smelling it to see if it needs washing). He does this as a sign of reverence for Christ, whose altar it is. You'll see later that he does the same thing to the Gospel after he reads it.

GREETING

Remember how to cross yourself? Well, this is the time to do it, as the priest says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.

Don't forget that the way the next line looks indicates you're supposed to say it.

Amen.

Now the priest continues with:

The Lord be with you.

And you say (this is the last time I'm going to remind you, so watch out for words that look like this):

And with your spirit.

RITE OF BLESSING AND SPRINKLING HOLY WATER

Sometime this is celebrated, but I won't go into the details about it. Just remember that if the priest sprinkles holy water in your direction, make the sign of the cross again (I told you Catholics do this a lot).

PENITENTIAL RITE

If the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water is not celebrated (which is most of the time), the Penitential Rite is celebrated right away. The priest tells us to remember our sins, saying something like:

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins,
and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

After we remember our sins for a while, one of the follow three prayers
are done:

#1:

**I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
(you should strike your breast three times as you say:)
through my fault,
through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.**

#2:

Have mercy on us, O Lord.

For we have sinned against you.

Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

And grant us your salvation.

#3: The priest, or someone else, leads everyone in the following way:

You were sent to heal the contrite of heart:

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

You came to call sinners:

Christ, have mercy. Or: Christe, eléison.

Christ, have mercy. Or: Christe, eléison.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us:

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

This is concluded with the priest giving absolution, "which, however, lacks the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance."⁵ This means that it doesn't take the place of going individually to a priest for Confession.

⁵ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 51

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May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

KYRIE

If the "Lord, have mercy" was not prayed in the Penitential Rite, it's prayed now:

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

Christ, have mercy. Or: Christe, eléison.

Christ, have mercy. Or: Christe, eléison.

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

Lord, have mercy. Or: Kýrie, eléison.

By the way, the "Kýrie, eléison" and "Christe, eléison" are not Latin, but Greek.

GLORIA

Usually this is said or sung next, but not all the time.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.**

**We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,**

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**with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.**

Amen.

It can also be said in Latin:

**Glória in excélsis Deo
et in terra pax homínibus bonæ voluntátis.**

**Laudámus te,
benedícimus te,
adorámus te,
glorificámus te,
grátias ágimus tibi propter magnam glóriam tuam,
Dómine Deus, Rex cæléstis,
Deus Pater omnípotens.**

**Dómine Fili unigénite, Iesu Christe,
Dómine Deus, Agnus Dei, Fílius Patris,
qui tollis peccáta mundi, miserére nobis;
qui tollis peccáta mundi, súscipe deprecatióem
nostram.
Qui sedes ad déxteram Patris, miserére nobis.**

**Quóniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dóminus,
tu solus Altíssimus,
Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spíritu: in glória Dei Patris
Amen.**

OPENING PRAYER

The priest then says:

Let us Pray.

A brief silence is observed now as everyone thinks of his own prayer petitions. The following prayer by the priest is called the Collect because it collects all these silent prayers of those present. The Collect ends with something like this:

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Or, maybe ends with something like this:

Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

We don't want to stand through the whole Mass, so everyone sits down now. Someone designated as a reader (the technical term is "lector") goes up front to read from the Bible. He's actually reading from a book called a "lectionary," which has all the Bible readings arranged in the order they're read according to the liturgical calendar. The stand that the lectionary is on has a few names: "pulpit," "ambo," or "lectern."

(Notice how the words "lector," "lectionary," and "lectern" all start with the same four letters. The Latin root "lect" means "to read.")

(Also notice how the lector bows to the altar on his way to the lectern; or at least he should.)

When he's done reading, he'll say:

The Word of Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

A Psalm from the Bible is read, or sung, now. To make it more interactive, everyone joins in. Try to quickly remember the response the leader says or sings. This is the line that you and everyone else gets to say or sing. They may have practiced this with the congregation before Mass.

SECOND READING

On major feast days and at Sunday Masses (remember you can also go to Mass during the week), another lector goes up to the lectern to read from the lectionary. Again, when he's done, he'll say:

The Word of Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA OR GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Now it's time for a priest or deacon to read the Gospel (one of the first four books of the New Testament). Since this is a story about Jesus (and could even be said to embody Him) everyone stands.

Usually everyone will first sing:

Alleluia.

When we're getting ready for Easter (the season of Lent), we're not supposed to say, "Alleluia," so one of the following are usually sung:

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Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

While the Alleluia or *Gospel Acclamation* is being sung, if there is a deacon or non-presiding priest, he prepares to read the *Gospel* by bowing profoundly before the presiding priest and saying in a low voice:

Your blessing Father.

The presiding priest then prays this blessing over him in a low voice:

May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips
that you may proclaim his *Gospel* worthily and well,
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The deacon or non-presiding priest crosses himself and says:

Amen.

If there's just one priest and no deacon, he quietly says the following as he bows before the altar:

Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God,
that I may worthily proclaim your holy *Gospel*.

GOSPEL

When the priest or deacon gets to the lectern, he says:

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to (whoever).

Everyone then traces a small Cross with their right thumb on their forehead (it looks like their scratching their forehead), on their lips, and on their heart. As they do this they're quietly praying, "May the *Gospel* be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart." At the same time, they're saying:

Glory to you, Lord.

The priest or deacon then reads the *Gospel*, and when he's done, he says:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The priest or deacon then kisses the *Gospel* reading, and quietly says:

Through the words of the *Gospel*
may our sins be wiped away.

And now everyone can sit again.

HOMILY

The presiding priest now spends some time explaining the Bible readings that were just read; although, the deacon or other priest can also do this. This is called a "homily." Usually this is quite interesting.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

At Sunday Masses, one of the creeds (a short summary of what Catholics believe) is said.

Oh yeah, everyone stands now.

NICENE CREED

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(you're supposed to bow for the next two lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary, and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and
glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

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**I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.**

Amen.

Or, it can be said in Latin:

**Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem cæli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.**

**Et in unum Dóminum Iesum Christum,
Fílium Dei unigénitum,
et ex Patre natum ante ómnia sæcula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
génitum, non factum, consubstantiálem Patri:
per quem ómnia facta sunt.**

**Qui propter nos hómines et propter nostram salútem
descendit de cælis.**

(you're supposed to bow for the next two lines)

**Et incarnátus est de Spíritu Sancto
ex María Vírgine, et homo factus est.**

**Crucifíxus étiam pro nobis sub Póntio Piláto;
passus et sepúltus est,
et resurréxit tértia die,
secúndum Scriptúras,
et ascéndit in cælum,
sedet ad déxteram Patris.**

**Et íterum ventúrus est cum glória,
iudicáre vivos et mórtuos,
cuius regni non erit finis.**

**Et in Spíritum Sanctum, Dóminum et vivificántem:
qui ex Patre Filióque procedit.**

**Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adorátur
et conglorificátur:**

qui locútus est per prophétas.

**Et unam, sanctam, cathólicam
et apostólicam Ecclésiám.**

**Confíteor unum baptísma
in remissionem peccatórum.**

**Et expecto resurrectionem mortuórum,
et vitam ventúri sæculi.**

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

Amen.

You may notice that the Latin word "consubstantiálem" is translated as "consubstantial." This is really just an Anglicization of the Latin word. The easiest way to understand this word is by remembering the English translation of the 1970s: "one in Being with the Father."

APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(you're supposed to bow for the next two lines)

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty;**

**from there he will come to judge the living and the
dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.**

Amen.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Now it's time to pray for stuff. Someone will lead in the prayers, and everyone responds the following way, although sometime a different response is used.

a prayer, followed by:
We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.
(repeat sequence)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR AND THE GIFTS

Everyone sits again, as the altar servers and adult server get the altar ready for the Liturgy of the Eucharist (sometimes the adult server is called an "acolyte"). The Eucharist is the bread and wine that's been changed into the Body and Blood of Christ (only the bread gets stored in the tabernacle). Usually the gifts of the bread and wine are brought from the back of the church to the priest, while a song is sung.

Once the altar's ready, and the gifts are in their places, the priest starts praying. If a song is being sung, he'll say these prayers quietly, but if the song is done (or if there was no song), he'll say the prayers out loud, and there's also something for you to say.

The priest picks up the bread, and prays:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

The priest or deacon pours the wine and a little bit of water into a cup, and prays:

By the mystery of this water and wine
may we come to share in the divinity of Christ
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

The priest then holds the cup up, and prays:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the wine we offer you:
fruit of the vine and work of human hands
it will become our spiritual drink.

Blessed be God for ever.

The priest then bows profoundly and says quietly:

With humble spirit and contrite heart
may we be accepted by you, O Lord,
and may our sacrifice in your sight this day
be pleasing to you, Lord God.

The priest now symbolically washes his hands with water, and says quietly:

Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

By the way, if you're an extraordinary Eucharistic minister, you're not supposed to wash your hands with this water. You should wash your hands with soap and warm water before Mass.

Then the priest says:

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters),
that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.

Everyone stands up now as they say:

**May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good and the good of all his holy Church.**

It should be noted that the sacrifice is Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

The priest prays a short prayer, ending something like:

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Amen.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Sometimes this next section gets sung! If not, you just say it.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right and just.

PREFACE

The next prayer starts with the following words, but then changes from day to day. When this prayer is done, there's something for you to say or sing.

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere
to give you thanks...

ACCLAMATION

Is it done? If so, it's your turn.

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Or, it could be done in Latin:

**Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra glória tua.
Hosánna in excélsis.
Benedíctus qui venit in nómine Dómini,
Hosánna in excélsis.**

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

This next part is very special. This is where the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This part of the Mass is called the "consecration," and the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is called "transubstantiation." The appearance of bread and wine stays the same, but the substance changes into the Body and Blood of Christ.

You are supposed to kneel in adoration now, "except when prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason."⁶ Whatever you do, don't sit. Of course if you're physically unable to kneel or stand, you may sit, but everyone else, DON'T SIT. Christ is King, and when a king enters a room, nobody sits. It's been known to happen that a king will cut off someone's head if he sits while the king enters a room. Luckily, King Jesus doesn't do this.

If you feel uncomfortable about kneeling, do it anyway. You'll look really out of place if you sit, as sitting is a sign of disrespect.

If you're unable to kneel, you may feel a little uncomfortable about standing while everyone else is kneeling, but that's OK; everyone will understand. Just don't sit unless you are unable to stand.

There are a number of different prayers that can be said now, and it's up to the priest to choose which ones to use that day. It would take too long to show you all the different prayers, but they all share some parts, and I'll show these to you.

After the priest's been praying for a while, he'll remind us of the Last Supper. Then he'll hold the bread up and say the words Jesus said:

⁶ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 43
Draft: 2010-12-14

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TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

As these words are said, the bread changes into the Body of Christ. This is such a special moment that bells are rung sometimes. As the priest shows the Body of Christ to you, you can quietly pray, "My Lord, and my God." After this, you should bow your head, as the priest genuflects.

The priest prays a bit more, holds up the cup, and says the words Jesus said:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

As these words are said, the wine changes into the Blood of Christ. Again, this is a special moment, and bells might be rung. As the priest show the chalice (cup) with the Blood of Christ to you, you can quietly repeat the prayer you said when the Body of Christ was elevated, or you could pray, "Be mindful, O Lord, of your creature whom you have redeemed by your most precious Blood." After this, you should bow your head, as the priest genuflects.

Many bow their heads as soon as the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ is elevated, but the reason They are elevated is so that you can look at Them in adoration. Once the priest places Them back on the altar is the time to lower your head.

If you are standing, for whatever "good reason,"⁷ you should make a profound bow after the elevation of the Body of Christ, and once again after the elevation of the Blood of Christ. If you can't make a profound bow, just bow your head, or whatever sign of adoration you can. If you are kneeling, just bow you head after the elevations since you are already kneeling in adoration.

Everyone usually stands up now, although some churches, most notably in the United States, stay kneeling.

The priest says:

The mystery of faith.

⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 43
Draft: 2010-12-14

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And, the congregation responds with one of the following:

**We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.**

Or:

**When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.**

Or:

**Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.**

Again, it's up to the priest to decide what to pray now, but when he's done, he'll hold up the Body of Christ (it may be on a plate called a "paten") and the cup with the Blood of Christ, and says:

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

COMMUNION RITE

LORD'S PRAYER

It's time to pray the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father). If you're still kneeling, you should stand up now.

The priest starts with:

At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

Then you pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

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**and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

The Lord's Prayer can also be said in Latin:

**Pater noster, qui es in cælis:
sanctificétur nomen tuum;
advéniat regnum tuum;
fiat volúntas tua, sicut in cælo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum cotidiánum da nobis hódie;
et dimítte nobis débita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitóribus nostris;
et ne nos indúcas in tentatiónem;
sed líbera nos a malo.**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

DOXOLOGY

**For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours now
and for ever.**

SIGN OF PEACE

The priest then says:

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles,
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And with your spirit.

Usually the priest will then say the following; however, this is optional. If the priest doesn't say the following, go straight into the Lamb of God.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

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It's now time to "offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest [to you] and in a sober manner."⁸ It's not time to say, "Hi, how ya doing?" This is an ancient rite, described in our earliest records of the Mass,⁹ where we symbolically proclaim that we have nothing against our neighbour (Cf. Matthew 5:23,24).

The way the sign of peace is exchanged can vary according to the culture and customs of the people, but usually in English speaking countries it's by shaking hands and saying something like, "Peace be with you."

Remember, exchanging the sign of peace is optional, so if it's not done, don't shake hands with anyone.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Stop shaking hands as soon as the following starts. Oh yeah, you should join in:

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.**

This can also be said or sung in Latin:

**Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccáta mundi:
miserére nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccáta mundi:
miserére nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccáta mundi:
dona nobis pacem.**

As this is being said or sung, the priest breaks a piece of Christ's Body in two, and drops a small piece of it into the cup of Christ's Blood. As he does this, he quietly says:

May this mingling of the Body and Blood
of our Lord Jesus Christ
bring eternal life to us who receive it.

The priest drops the small piece of Consecrated Host (bread that's been changed into the Body of Christ) in to the Consecrated Wine "to signify

⁸ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 82

⁹ Cf. *First Apology* 65, St. Justin Martyr (100 - 165 A.D.)

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the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the living and glorious Body of Jesus Christ."¹⁰

Remember that the priest dropped a small piece of Christ's Body into the cup, so if you drink from this cup, you're not grossed-out because you think it came out of someone's mouth.

In some places, such as in the United States, everyone kneels again until they go to receive the Eucharist.

PRIVATE PREPARATION OF THE PRIEST

The priest now quietly says a special prayer for himself that goes something like this:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,
who by the will of the Father
and the work of the Holy Spirit,
through your Death gave life to the world;
free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood,
from all my sins and from every evil;
keep me always faithful to your commandments,
and never let me be parted from you.

Or, like this:

May the receiving of your Body and Blood,
Lord Jesus Christ,
not bring me to judgment and condemnation,
but through your loving mercy
be for me protection in mind and body,
and a healing remedy.

While the priest says one of the above prayers, you can silently pray something similar: that you "may fruitfully receive Christ's Body and Blood."¹¹

COMMUNION

The priest genuflects, holds up the broken pieces of Christ's Body, and says:

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

¹⁰ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 83

¹¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 84

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**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

The priest says quietly:

May the Body of Christ
keep me safe for eternal life.

Then he eats the Body of Christ, and picks up the cup of Christ's Blood.
He quietly says:

May the Blood of Christ
keep me safe for eternal life.

Then he drinks the Blood of Christ.

COMMUNION SONG

Now it's time for everyone, who are prepared, to eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood, while a song may be sung. The Body and Blood of Christ is very sacred, and only Catholics (not Protestants) that have had their First Communion can receive It. As well, if you have any grave sins that have not been brought to Confession, you cannot receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Oh yeah, remember you're also not supposed to eat for at least an hour before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ (only water and medicine is OK within this hour). You should NOT be chewing gum when you go up for Communion. It's even questionable whether you should be chewing gum during the hour fast before receiving Eucharist.

A custom has developed in some places to go up for a blessing if you cannot, for whatever reason, receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It's really not the right time for this, but if you do, cross both of your hands over your heart when you go up to signify that you only want a blessing.

This crossing of hands over your heart to signify you only want a blessing can cause some confusion because many Eastern Christians cross their hands over their hearts when they receive Communion. If an Eastern Christian goes to a Roman Mass, he may only get a blessing when he's expecting the Eucharist. This is especially the case with children who are too intimidated to say anything to the person distributing Communion.

Some people will sit while they're waiting to go up for Communion, but King Jesus is still in the room, so **STAY STANDING!** Unless, of course, you're kneeling, in which case, you can stay kneeling or start standing. Whatever you do, don't sit until you've received Communion.

Most places allow you to stand while receiving the Body of Christ; although, a few places still require you to kneel. The ordinary way to

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receive the Body of Christ in on the tongue; however, many places give you the option to receive in the hand.

If you don't kneel while receiving the Body of Christ, you should make a sign of reverence as you approach the Eucharist. You should do this when you're second in line to the person distributing the Body of Christ. The suggested sign of reverence is a bow of the head;¹² although, you can also do what Eastern Christians do: a profound bow while making the sign of the cross.

When you get to the front of the line, look into the eyes of the person distributing the Body of Christ as he says:

The Body of Christ.

Keep looking into his eyes, and say:

Amen.

To receive on the tongue, simply open your mouth and stick out your tongue a little, while the Body of Christ is placed on your tongue.

To receive in the hand, cup your dominant hand under your weaker hand. The Body of Christ will be placed in your weaker hand. Stay in front of the person distributing Communion as you pick the Body of Christ up with your dominant hand, place It in your mouth, and consume It. DO NOT walk around with It in your hands, and DO NOT give It to anybody else. Remember that what you're holding is the most precious thing there is. Once the Host is in your mouth, check for any crumbs in your hand so you can eat them as well (these crumbs are also the Body of Christ).

If you're only coming up for a blessing, go to a person distributing the Body of Christ. Don't go to a person with a cup of Christ's Blood for a blessing.

When you go to receive the Blood of Christ, look into the person's eyes as he says:

The Blood of Christ.

Keep looking into his eyes, and say:

Amen.

Receive the cup, and have a small drink. If you see a small piece of bread in the cup, remember that the priest put it there. As well, the cup is wiped and turned every time someone drinks from it. The Blood of Christ also contains alcohol, which kills germs, but if you have a cold or flu, skip the Blood that day.

¹² Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 160

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DO NOT dip Christ's Body into His Blood. This is called "intinction," and there's a number of reasons why it shouldn't be done in a Roman Mass. A practical reason is that there are far more germs on your hand than in your mouth. Another reason is that this would not be receiving the Blood of Christ, but taking. Only priests are allowed to take the Eucharist, everyone else must receive from the hands of others.

Intinction is the normal way of receiving Communion in Eastern churches. However, it's done very differently than in Roman churches. The person receiving Communion does not say, "Amen," but approaches very closely to the person distributing Communion, tilts his head back, and opens his mouth. The person distributing will then drop a piece of the Body of Christ that has been soaked in the Blood of Christ into the open mouth of the person that is receiving with a spoon.

Now you go back to your seat. Some people will sit, and others will kneel, and still others will stay standing until the very last person has received Communion. Standing until everyone has received is a sign of community, but not every church does this.

PERIOD OF SILENCE OR SONG OF PRAISE

Now it's time to silently pray as you sit or kneel. A good prayer to pray is the one the people purifying the sacred vessels (washing the dishes) are praying:

What has passed our lips as food, O Lord,
may we possess in purity of heart,
that what has been given to us in time
may be our healing for eternity.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

The priest will end the period of silence by saying:

Let us pray.

Everyone stands up, and the priest prays a short prayer that ends something like:

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

GREETING

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

BLESSING

Everyone makes the sign of the cross again, as the priest says:

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Notice the priest didn't cross himself, but crossed everyone else. This is what I was talking about earlier.

There are a few other blessings the priest can use. Some have a few verses which everyone answers with:

Amen.

DISMISSAL

The priest or deacon then lets you know that everything is over by saying one of the following:

Go forth, the Mass is ended.

Or:

Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

Or:

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

Or:

Go in peace.

To which the congregation replies:

Thanks be to God.

The last song is sung now (unless there's no singing that day, which is the case at some week-day Masses). The priest and deacon kiss the altar again, then he and the helpers go in front of the altar, bow, then leave.

Most people pray a little bit more now. Some kneel and others sit. It's a good time to visit with everyone, unless it's Good Friday (everyone leaves the church in silence on Good Friday). Some churches even have coffee and snacks after the Mass (usually juice for the kids).

If you want, you can go pray in front of the tabernacle (you can find it by the important looking red light). Remember to bow to the altar, and genuflect to the tabernacle. If you're in an old church with the tabernacle on the altar against the front wall, just genuflect.

Why do Catholics bounce on one knee?

When you're leave the church (or going for coffee), don't forget to cross yourself with holy water, and I hope you come back again soon!

Draft