

Why can't I come forward for Communion?

The Catholic Church strives to be of one mind and heart. This unity is celebrated and strengthened through Communion. If your religious beliefs are substantially different from those of the Catholic Church, then you are not *in communion* with us. It would not make sense for you to come forward for Communion. Even as we hope and pray for unity among Christians, Catholics realize with sadness that such unity isn't yet a reality.

Liturgy comes from the Greek word for the work or action of the people. Our attentive listening, prayer, posture, and responses make us true participants in the ritual that is unfolding.

The Real Presence of Christ

Catholics recognize that in the liturgy Christ is present in the following four ways: the Presider, acting *in persona Christi*; the Word that is proclaimed; the eucharistic species or consecrated bread and wine; and the people who have gathered, the faith-filled worshipping community. Christ is present differently to us in each of these ways, but in each, his presence is real and effective.

Thank you for spending some time in thoughtful study of the Catholic liturgy. Since this booklet might have given you as many questions as it tried to answer, please call or come to the Newman Catholic Center if you would like to continue the dialogue. We welcome you.

You are welcome to keep this booklet, otherwise, please return it to the table in the Gathering Space.

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GUIDE TO THE MASS

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LITURGY WITH NOTES OF EXPLANATION



Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me."

Luke 22:14-20

STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTORY RITES

ENTRANCE SONG (*All stand.*)

SIGN OF THE CROSS & GREETING

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

All: **Amen.**

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And with your spirit.**

PENITENTIAL RITE (*Assembly might kneel.*)

Presider: Lord, have mercy. All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Presider: Christ, have mercy. All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Presider: Lord, have mercy. All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Presider: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. All: **Amen.**

GLORIA (usually sung)

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

OPENING PRAYER

After the Presider says the prayer, the assembly responds: **Amen.**

(*All sit.*)

EXPLANATION

THE SIGN OF PEACE

Christ came that all people would receive the peace, the *shalom*, of God's Reign. Through a handshake or a hug we extend Christ's peace to each other.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

As the host is broken, we remember that Christ was broken by death in order that we might be made whole. The title "Lamb of God" is from the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation. It recalls the lambs that were sacrificed in memory of the Israelites' (Jews) liberation from slavery. Jesus Christ is our Lamb of God because he was sacrificed in order to free us from sin and death.

COMMUNION

Catholics believe that God acts through the Mass to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Coming forward for Communion is an expression of thanks to God for the gift of new life, a courageous promise to follow Christ, and a sign of one's unity with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Please respect the sacred reality of Holy Communion.

When we say that "we are not worthy" like the centurion whose slave Jesus healed (Mt 8:8; Lk 7:6), we remember and celebrate that the love of God is a gift. Nothing we have ever done or could do would earn us God's gift of love. Instead, we simply and lovingly receive the gift of God's very self.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Following a period of silence (which we all need in our lives!), the Presider concludes the Liturgy of the Eucharist with this prayer.

DISMISSAL

The word Mass comes from the Latin word for send. At the end of Mass, we are sent forth to share the good news of salvation with others.

Thank you for your presence.

STRUCTURE

THE SIGN OF PEACE

Presider: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I give you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Presider: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: **And with your spirit.**

Presider: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Cantor/Choir leads the assembly in the Lamb of God.
(All kneel.)

COMMUNION

Presider: 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.

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider: Let us pray. *(All stand.)*

After the Presider says the prayer, the assembly responds: **Amen.**

CONCLUDING RITE

BLESSING

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: **And with your spirit.**

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

All: **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Presider: The mass is ended, go in peace.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

CLOSING SONG

EXPLANATION

INTRODUCTORY RITES

A rite is a customary or traditional way of doing something; the word ritual comes from it. We enter into and experience rituals at many levels of our being from our senses to our intellect to our feelings.

GREETING

We begin our liturgy with the sign of the cross, one of the many symbols of our faith. By making the sign of the cross, we remind ourselves that we are about to remember, celebrate, and proclaim the new life that Christ's death and resurrection has brought us. Amen is an affirmation of what was spoken — an I believe or it is true. “And with your spirit” is our prayer that the Holy Spirit of God will help the priest who presides over the assembly in a unique way.

PENITENTIAL RITE

We confess our own failure to follow Christ and our need for God's mercy and healing. We do this as a community because our individual sins hurt others, and we need the help of our community to try to sin no more.

There are several forms of the Penitential Rite. Sometimes, the Confiteor (“I confess”) is used —

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, 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.

GLORIA

This joyful hymn of praise is based on the angelic hymn of Luke 2:14. (It is not sung during Lent because this liturgical season emphasizes the subdued tone of repentance.)

OPENING PRAYER (“Collect”)

When the Presider says, “Let us pray,” he pauses so we all have a chance to speak our own prayers in our hearts. Then he “collects” these individual prayers and folds them into a single spoken prayer that we lift up to God.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

A lector proclaims the selected passage and then says, “The Word of the Lord.”

All: **Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (usually sung)

SECOND READING

A lector proclaims the selected passage and then says, “The Word of the Lord.”

All: **Thanks be to God.**

(All stand.)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (usually sung)

All: **Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: **And with your spirit.**

Presider: A reading from the holy gospel according to _____.

All: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

After the Presider has proclaimed the gospel passage, he says, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

All: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

(All sit.)

HOMILY

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Before his Passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus shared a Passover meal with his disciples, his Last Supper. At this meal Jesus told his followers to break the bread and share the cup in memory of him. Jesus, a Jew, used the word memory according to its Jewish meaning.

Ritual remembering was the Jewish way of entering the story of salvation. Through ritual Jews re-entered saving events of their past so that their past became part of their present. Through ritual they “punched a hole through time” so to speak.

Jesus uses ritual in the same way. Whenever we gather for the ritual meal that we call the Eucharist, we enter into the story of Jesus so that his saving deeds of the past become real for us in the present.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

The “mystery of our faith” is the salvation brought to us through Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and ascension. In this context the word mystery doesn’t refer to something we solve like a detective story. Rather, it means something hidden which has been revealed, something that seems beyond our reach while inviting us forward. We don’t “solve” our faith in Jesus; we continue to get to know and to follow him better.

The word mystery and the word sacrament once meant the same thing.

DOXOLOGY

This is the climax of the Eucharistic Prayer. United by the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ (the assembly) gives thanks and praise to God.

STRUCTURE

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Presider: May the Lord be with you.

All: **And with your spirit.**

Presider: Lift up your hearts.

All: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Presider: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: **It is right and just.**

The Presider continues the prayer.

ACCLAMATION (The **SANCTUS** or **HOLY**) (usually sung)

All: **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.**

(*All kneel.*) The Presider continues the prayer.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION (usually sung)

Presider: the mystery of faith

All: (the sung response varies)

The Presider continues the prayer.

DOXOLOGY (usually sung)

Presider: 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.

All: **Amen.** (*All stand.*)

COMMUNION RITE

THE LORD'S PRAYER (many in the assembly join hands)

All: **Our father. . .**

Presider: Deliver us, Lord. Jesus Christ.

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

EXPLANATION

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

This structure is adapted from ancient Jewish ritual. A lector proclaims selected biblical passages to the assembly so that we can reflect anew on our salvation history (how God is working to bring all people to salvation). Christ, the living Word, is made present to us as his Word is spoken aloud in our midst.

FIRST READING

The passage is from the Old Testament (during the Easter season it's from the Acts of the Apostles). The reading connects thematically with the Third Reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

This sung prayer from the Book of Psalms is our prayerful response to the First Reading.

SECOND READING

This passage from the New Testament does not connect thematically with the other readings, but is part of a continuous reading (*lectio continua*). For example, we hear from parts of the letter to the Romans for several Sundays, then from Philippians, and so on.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia or Hallelujah is a Hebrew word for praise the LORD. The word is not sung or spoken during Lent.

GOSPEL READING

We stand in a posture of attentiveness and reverence to receive God's word. Many members of the assembly trace a small sign of the cross over their foreheads, lips, and hearts. Their prayer is something like "God be in my thoughts, on my lips, and in my heart."

HOMILY

An ordained minister (bishop, priest or deacon) usually draws from the readings and from what he knows of the needs of those gathered in order to offer a meaningful reflection.

STRUCTURE

NICENE CREED (see white card or p. 8 of hymnal) (*All stand.*)

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL)

After each petition is read, the Cantor says, “We pray”

All: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

(*All sit.*)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (If the assembly is singing, the Presider says the following quietly and the assembly’s responses are omitted.)

Presider: 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.

All: **Blessed be God forever.**

Presider: 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.

All: **Blessed be God forever.**

(*All stand.*)

Presider: Pray brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

All: **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.**

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

EXPLANATION

NICENE CREED

This profession of faith was mostly formulated in 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea to express foundational Christian beliefs.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL)

Gathered as the Body of Christ, we the faithful bring our needs before God. We pray through Christ who intercedes for us.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

This ritual is patterned after the form of worship of the first Christian communities. It means far more than will fit into this booklet! The Presider acts in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) as he takes bread, gives thanks, breaks the bread, and distributes it to us with the help of others. This is the same ritual action of Christ when he fed the crowds and led his disciples in prayer at the Last Supper. The Presider does not repeat Christ’s sacrifice; rather, our participation in this ritual action makes Christ’s saving work real to us and strengthens us in ways that private prayer does not.

Eucharist means to give thanks or thanksgiving. We give thanks first and foremost for the salvation we have in Christ.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

We offer God simple gifts of bread and wine, we offer money for the continuing work of the Church, and we offer ourselves as gifts for God to transform.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

This short prayer, which echoes themes of the liturgical season, introduces the Eucharistic Prayer.