

Catholics and the Mass



Opening Prayer:

Loving God, you invite us to spend time with you in prayer.
Help us take the time to grow in your love.
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen.

Scriptural References:

Exodus 13:1-10 - The Passover Meal

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

³ Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. ⁴ Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving. ⁵ When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites - the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey - you are to observe this ceremony in this month: ⁶ For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the LORD. ⁷ Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. ⁸ On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' ⁹ This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. ¹⁰ You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

Notes:

- *Unleavened bread reflected the fact that the Israelites had no time to put leaven in their bread before their hasty departure from Egypt [c.1300BC]; it was also apparently connected to the barley harvest (Leviticus 23:4-14).*
- *A common Jewish tradition in preparing for the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to sprinkle leavened (yeast) bread crumbs throughout the house and then subsequently sweep them all up and collectively burn them outside. You might be asking yourself, "Why would they do this?" Well, in the Bible, leaven symbolizes error or evil. It is the substance that causes fermentation. The Lord said to His disciples "Beware of the leaven (false doctrine) of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15). In addition, the apostle Paul warned the Church at Corinth that "a little leaven (yeast) leaveneth (ferments) the whole lump" (I Corinthians 5:6). Paul was simply saying that if sin goes unchecked, it will permeate and infect everything and everyone around them.*

Matthew 26:17-30 - The Lord's Supper

¹⁷On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"
¹⁸He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.' " ¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.
²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."
²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"
²³Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me."
²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."
²⁵Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"
Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."
²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."
²⁷Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."
³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Acts 2:42-47

⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.
⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Key Words:

From these scriptural texts and your own experience of Holy Mass, let us try and come up with some key words that describe our understanding of Holy Mass

A Brief History of the Mass:

Based upon: “A Short History of the Roman Mass” by Michael Davis

From the time of the early Christian Church many different ‘rites’ of Holy Mass were used.

However, there were common elements.

- The reading of scripture – Old + New Testament, and Psalms
- The lessons were read in a loud voice from a convenient place where they could be heard
- The reciting of the Lord’s Prayer
- Extempore / non-formal prayer
- Bread and wine brought to the altar at the appropriate moment
- Remembrance of the Lord’s Supper / “the breaking of bread”

Everything would evidently have been done with the greatest possible reverence, and gradually and naturally signs of respect emerged, and became established customs. In other words, liturgical actions became ritualized, such as the washing of hands during the preparation of the Gifts of Bread and Wine

The only really ritual actions we find in the first two centuries are certain postures - kneeling or standing for prayer - and such ceremonies as the kiss of peace, all of which were inherited from the Jews.

It is easy to understand that the order, the general outline of the service, would become constant almost unconsciously. People who do the same thing continually, naturally do it in much the same way.

The early Christians knew for instance at which moment to expect the lessons, when to receive Communion, when to stand for prayer, etc.

The prayers too, although there was as yet no idea of fixed forms, would naturally tend towards uniformity, at least in outline. Here also habit and custom would soon fix their order.

The dialogue form of prayer, of which we have many traces in this first period, also involves uniformity, at least in the general idea of the prayers. The people made their responses, "Amen," "Lord have mercy," "Thanks be to God", and so on, at certain points, because they knew more or less what the celebrant would say each time.

In a dramatic dialogue each side must be prepared for the other. So the order and general arrangement of the prayers would remain constant. We find in many cases the very same words used, whole formulas, sometimes long ones, recur. This can be easily understood.

In the first place there were many formulas that occur in the Old or New Testament, that were well known in Jewish services. These were used as liturgical formulas by Christians too. Examples of such forms are: "Amen," "Alleluia", "Lord have mercy", "Thanks be to God ", "For ever and ever", "Blessed are Thou O Lord our God."

The city of Rome had it's own 'rite' called the Roman Rite. However, it was only from about the 8th Century AD that the Western Church began to universally use the Roman Rite, superceding what are termed the various Gallician rites in use prior to this time. However, many different forms of the Roman Rite evolved throughout the Western Church.¹

The people of Milan took up arms on several occasions to try and resist attempts to impose the Roman Rite upon them!

The next major milestone was the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563), the so-called start of the Counter Reformation. A piece of great work that came out of this Council was The Missal of St Pius V.

The Missal was not published until 1570, seven years after the Council had closed. "Because the Missal is an act of the Council of Trent, its official title is *Missale Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum (The Roman Missal Restored According to the Decrees of the Holy Council of Trent)*. This was the first time during the one thousand five hundred and seventy years of the Church's history that a Council or Pope had used legislation to specify and impose a complete rite of Mass."

This rite of Mass is known as the Tridentine Mass and was used around the Catholic world up until the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965). The Second Vatican Council led the way for the publication of a *Novus Ordo Missae (New Order of the Mass)* in 1970. Please refer to the Vatican II document: "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy".

¹ Rites in the Eastern Church evolved separately but with many similar elements. After it's foundation in 330AD the Eastern Church was based around Constantinople. The break between the Eastern and Western Churches formerly took place in 1054.

This 'new' rite is the one in use today in the majority of Catholic Churches around the world.

Mass liturgies are contained in the "Roman Missal".



Tridentine Rite



Novus Ordo

Structure of the Mass:

Introductory Rites

- Entrance Procession and Hymn
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite – includes the Confiteor and Kyrie Eleison
- Hymn of Praise – Gloria
- Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading – a passage from one of the Books of the Old Testament
- Responsorial Psalm – a reciting of one of the Old Testament Psalms [a religious chant, song or poem of praise]
- Second Reading – a passage from one of the non-Gospel texts in the New Testament, eg. Paul's Letters to members of the early Church, The Acts of the Apostles, etc
- Gospel Greeting
- Gospel – a passage from one of the four Gospels
- Homily
- Profession of Faith – Nicene Creed
- Intercessions – Bidding Prayers

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Collection of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- Prayer over the Gifts
- Preface and Acclamation - Sanctus
- Eucharistic Prayer – includes Words of Consecration and moment of Transubstantiation
- Memorial Acclamation
- Great Amen
- The Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Breaking of the Bread
- Lamb of God – Agnus Dei
- Holy Communion
- Communion Hymn
- Thanksgiving Prayer

Concluding Rites

- Closing Prayer
- Blessing
- Dismissal
- Recessional Hymn

Notes - taken from various Catholic resources on the Internet

The Confiteor – The Confiteor is so called from the first word, “Confiteor” (“I confess”). This prayer is a general confession of sins. It is used in the Roman Rite at the beginning of Mass and on various other occasions as a preparation for the reception of some grace.

Kyrie Eleison - Greek for "Lord have mercy" the Kyrie Eleison is a very old, even pre-Christian, expression used constantly in all Christian liturgies. This same formula is found often in the Old Testament (Eg. Psalm 4:2, 6:3, 9:14, 25:11, 121:3; Isaiah 33:2; Tobit 8:10; etc.). In these places it seems already to be a quasi-liturgical exclamation. In the New Testament the form occurs repeatedly (Matthew 9:27, 20:30, 15:22; Mark 10:47; Luke 16:24, 17:13):

Matthew 20:30:

³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

The Gloria - "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" (Latin for "Glory to God on high") is the title and beginning of the great doxology (song of praise) used in the Roman Catholic Mass and, in translation, in the services of many other Christian churches.

The text of the song begins with a slight variation on the words sung by the angels as part of the announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the field in Luke 2:14. The song continues with verses added to make a proper doxology. This song was originally in Greek and goes back to the times of the Early Church. Another form of the song goes to at least the third century, if not to the first.

In the Roman Catholic Mass, the Gloria is sung on Sundays and Solemnities after the Kyrie and before the Opening Prayer. It is omitted during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, except on feasts and on Holy Thursday. It is also not sung at funerals or memorial masses.

The Gloria and the Te Deum are the only remains of the psalmi idiotici (psalms composed by private persons instead of being taken from the Biblical Psalter) that were popular in the second and third centuries. The extraordinary beauty of these two poems is a witness to the splendour of lyric poetry of the Early Church during a time when they were suffering extensive persecution.

Nicene Creed - The Nicene Creed, is a Christian statement of faith accepted by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and most Protestant churches. It gets its name from the First Council of Nicaea (325), at which it was adopted and from the First Council of Constantinople (381), at which a revised version was accepted.

Preface and Acclamation - The Sanctus immediately follows the Preface of the Eucharistic prayer. The Preface alters according to the season, and usually concludes with words describing the praise of the worshippers joining with the praise of the angels.

The Latin text of the Sanctus reads:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
(Holy, Holy, Holy,)
Dominus Deus Sabaoth;
(Lord God of Hosts;)
pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
(Heaven and earth are full of your glory.)
Osanna in excelsis.
(Hosanna in the highest.)

The text is taken from *Isaiah 6.3*, which describes the prophet Isaiah's vision of the throne of God surrounded by six-winged, ministering seraphim. This text also influenced *Revelation 4.8*.

Isaiah 6:1-3:

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

The Sanctus concludes with words taken from *Matthew 21.9:*

Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini.
(Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.)
Osanna in excelsis.
(Hosanna in the highest.)

These are the words shouted by the crowd who gathered to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

The Sanctus is one of the elements of the liturgy for which we have the earliest evidence. St. Clement of Rome (d. about 104 AD) mentions it in his writings.

Transubstantiation – It is our belief as Catholics that at the moment of Consecration, the elements (or "gifts" as they are termed for liturgical purposes) of bread and wine are transformed (literally trans-substance-iated) into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The terms "elements" or "gifts" are preferred, as it is theologically incorrect to refer to the "bread" or "wine" after they have been consecrated, because as Catholics we believe they are no longer bread and wine.

We believe that the elements are not only spiritually transformed, but are actually (substantially) transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The elements retain the appearance or "accidents" of bread and wine, but are indeed the actual Body and Blood of Christ, the actual, physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The Lord's Prayer – This prayer is sometimes known by its first two Latin words as the Pater Noster, or the English equivalent Our Father, and is probably the best-known prayer in Christianity.

According to the New Testament, the prayer was given by Jesus as a response to a request from the Apostles for guidance on how to pray.

This prayer is found in the Gospel of *Matthew 6:9-13*, where it appears as part of the Sermon on the Mount. A similar prayer is found in *Luke 11:2-4*. Luke's version does not begin "Our Father in Heaven," but rather simply with "Father" (which would be Abba in Aramaic).

Agnus Dei – "Agnus Dei" is Latin for 'Lamb of God' and refers to Jesus Christ in his role of the perfect sacrificial offering that atones for the sins of man in Christian theology, harkening back to ancient Jewish Temple sacrifices.

Agnus Dei is the popular name for the litany beginning with these words, which is said to have been introduced into the Mass by Pope Sergius I (687-701). Based upon *John 1: 29*, the Latin form (with translation) is:

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

John 1: 29:

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Thanksgiving Prayer after Mass:

Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas -

Philosopher, theologian, doctor of the Church (Angelicus Doctor), patron of Catholic universities, colleges, and schools. Born at Rocca Secca in the Kingdom of Naples, 1225 or 1227; died at Fossa Nuova, 7 March, 1274.

I thank you, holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, who deigned to feast me, sinful and unworthy servant, with the precious body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, not for any merit of mine, but only because of your merciful goodness. And I pray that this Holy Communion, far from condemning me to punishment, may bring about my pardon and salvation, encompassing me with the armor of faith and the shield of a good will. By it let my vices be done away, all lustful desires extinguished. May it advance me in charity, patience, humility, obedience, and every other virtue. Let it be strong defense against the wiles of all my enemies, visible and invisible, allaying for me every disturbance of flesh and spirit, binding me firmly to you, the one true God, and bringing my last hour to a happy close. I pray, too, that it may be your pleasure to call my sinful self one day to that banquet, wonderful past all telling, where you, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, feast your saints with the vision of yourself, who are true light, the fulfillment of all desires, the joy that knows no ending, gladness unalloyed, and perfect bliss: through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.