

Liturgy Series

Elements of the Mass

This section will look at each element of the Mass. We will explore each element's objective, its place in the layout of the liturgy, the proper stance for the presider as each element unfolds, and the tone for that element, depending on the liturgical calendar.

The Mass is also referred to, at times, as
The Liturgy of the Eucharist or simply The Eucharist.

In Vatican II Documents the Liturgy of **the Eucharist** is called
the source and summit of our Christian life.

At a Mass the real presence of Jesus is known in three ways:

In the Assembly

("where two or three are gathered in my name, there Am I")

In the Word Proclaimed

In the Eucharist

(Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is called "the most excellent presence." It is different than his presence in the Assembly or the Word, because his presence in the Assembly is conditional upon our gathering; in the Word it is conditional upon it being proclaimed; however, in the Eucharist, once the bread and wine are consecrated, Jesus' presence remains whether we are present or not.)

The Celebration of the Mass or The Eucharist
is an action of the Assembly (the People of God)
presided over by an ordained priest.

The Mass is comprised of two main parts:

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

And

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

These two main parts are bookended by

The Opening Rites

And

The Concluding Rites.

Some parts of the Mass, with some minor variations, are always the
same at each Mass. These are called “the ordinary” parts.

(eg – the Gloria, the Holy Holy, the Lamb of God)

Other parts of the Mass change according to specific feasts or season.

These are called “the proper” parts.

(eg - the presider’s prayers, the readings)

The next page contains a listing of all the elements in order.
Following that page we will look at each section of the Mass.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite
- Gloria
- Opening

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading (on Sundays and solemnities)
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith (on Sundays, solemnities, and special occasions)
- Universal Prayer

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- Prayer over the Offerings
- Eucharistic Prayer
 - Preface
 - Holy, Holy, Holy
 - First half of prayer, including Consecration
 - Mystery of Faith
 - Second half of prayer, ending with Doxology
- The Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Lamb of God
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- Optional announcements
- Greeting and Blessing
- Dismissal

The Introductory Rites

(usually done standing)

**The objective of the Introductory Rites:
is to gather the people, help them to focus for the coming celebration,
and, by reminding them of God’s constant love and mercy and our need for
that love and mercy, to dispose them to hear the Word of God.**

(The context for this objective is that we have gathered from many different settings, with many different worries, cares, and distractions. Yet we all come together to this place for the same reason in faith. The introductory rites help us to transition into this shared context of faith.)

The Entrance

There are several ways to begin liturgy. Things to consider are:

- The season of the year – different seasons require different tones to be set
- Special feasts -
- The size of the space and the assembly – larger spaces and larger assemblies require a ‘bigger’ or more prominent entrance
- The ‘culture’ of a regularly gathering assembly – are people expecting a simple liturgy, a formal liturgy, or something in between? (If people are expecting a simple liturgy it is not acceptable to throw them a curve without warning.)

Here are some types of entrances:

- A procession – this can be as simple as the presider coming down the main aisle during the gathering hymn; or a small procession with a cross and two acolytes carrying the candles; or a formal procession at a big celebration with incense, Book of Gospels, Cross bearer, candles. In any procession the presider comes last.
- Presider already at front; says a few words of welcome and gather, and calls for people to rise for the gathering hymn (this is what we do during ordinary time)

- For different seasons the entrance is adapted to suit the tone of the season to help people to focus. Examples – the way we gather in Advent (quiet) , or Lent (the chimes and silence) , or Easter (the Gloria and going to the font)

The Gathering Hymn:

The objective of this hymn is to gather the assembly in song, and focus us toward joyfully gathering to praise God. Singing is perhaps the most effective way to do this.

- The gathering hymn may be chosen according to season or tone for the liturgy. CAUTION: it should always be uplifting; while it may be reflective at times (eg – Advent) – it should contain hope – if you use a hymn that is a dirge you will spend the rest of the liturgy trying to get people’s energy back up.

The Greeting

This refers to the formal greeting with which we begin most liturgies. It consists of

The Sign of the Cross

This is a prayer, blessing, a sacramental, with which Christians begin their prayer, focusing upon God and acting in God’s name. In the Ecumenical Catholic Church, we speak of God as both Mother and Father, so we begin:

“In the name of God Who Is Father/Mother (say both or use one or the other), and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Alternative version: “In the name of God Who Is Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life. Amen.”

There are some occasions when we do not use this formal greeting – examples in our parish are Lent, sometimes Advent – but it is the normal way to begin each liturgy.

The Presidential Greeting

This is the formal greeting of the presider to the assembly, and its objective is to formally begin the dialogue and the dance.

This greeting should be said, even if you have already informally greeted the assembly. If you choose to greet the assembly after this formal greeting, be sure to keep it brief. This is not a place for a lot of talk.

The presidential greeting forms are:

The Lord be with you. (Res) And also with You. or

The grace of God, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

[Bishop’s greeting: Peace be with you.]

The Penitential Rite:

The objective of the penitential rite is to call to mind God’s unconditional love, God’s endless mercy – and our deep need for these. The caution here is not to get so hung up on the latter that we forget the former and fail to dispose ourselves to God’s love.

There are three forms from which the presider may choose. The most commonly used form is Form C, but the others may be used according to the Sacramentary.

Form A: The Confiteor

I confess to almighty God, and to you my brothers and sister, that I have sinned through my own fault, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do. And 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.

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

Lord have mercy. (Res: Lord have mercy)

Christ have mercy. (Res: Christ have mercy)

Lord have mercy. (Res: Lord have mercy)

Form B: Dialogue (nb – this one has rarely been used anywhere)

Presider: Have mercy on us, O Lord.

People: For we have sinned against you.

Presider: Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

People: And grant us your salvation

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

Lord have mercy. (Res: Lord have mercy)

Christ have mercy. (Res: Christ have mercy)

Lord have mercy. (Res: Lord have mercy)

Form C: Tropes (the most commonly used)

Lord Jesus, you came to heal the brokenhearted. Lord have mercy.

(Res: Lord have mercy)

Christ Jesus, you came to call sinners. Christ have mercy.

(Res: Christ have mercy)

Lord Jesus, you are the love of God in our midst. Lord have mercy.

(Res: Lord have mercy)

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

(Note: when using Form C, the text may be adapted to a particular season or theme from the upcoming readings, but it should always be brief, and it should address Jesus – do not use these to list our sins!)

The Gloria

The objective of the Gloria is joyful praise to God. Since this is what our entire liturgy is about, it is an important prayer, and completes our shift from the cares and concerns of daily life to this gathering where we together focus on God.

- In ordinary time the Gloria is usually said; it may, however, be omitted on occasion if there are extra things going on in the Mass.
- In Advent and Lent the Gloria is not said
- In Easter and Christmas season the Gloria is sung or said

The Opening Prayer (aka, The Collect)

The objective of the Opening Prayer is for the presider to use this moment to collect all that we have done in the opening rites in a final focus, disposing us to hear the Word of God.

The presider's stance is the "prayer stance" – arms extended wide. This not only conveys openness to God in prayer, but also a sense of embracing the entire assembly and drawing them in as one.

In the Sacramentary, which we use, there are two opening prayers from which the presider may choose:

- The first prayer listed is a translation from the ancient opening prayers used in the early church.

- The “alternative opening prayer” uses more flowery language, and was composed, based on the original, but contemporized when the Sacramentary was put together following Vatican II

(Note: it is good to review these options prior to the liturgy, to see which one best fits the readings, homily, and tone of the Mass. Also, when using the alternative prayer, be careful to read slowly – there are usually a lot of images in those prayers, which people need time to hear and conceptualize.)

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The overall objective of the Liturgy of the Word is to stir our hearts and nurture our hunger to receive the Lord in the Eucharist, so that, strengthened by this Sacred Meal, we may go forth to act on what we have heard.

The Lectionary is divided into two cycles:
The Sunday Cycle and The Weekday Cycle

The Sunday Cycle is broken down into three years:
each week has first reading, response psalm, second reading
and gospel:

Year A: (Gospel of Matthew is focus)

Year B: (Gospel of Mark is focus)

Year C: (Gospel of Luke is Focus)

The Weekday Cycle is broken down into two years
and usually has a first reading, a response psalm, and gospel:

Year I: (odd years)

Year II: (even years)

The First Reading

The first reading is taken from the Old Testament (except during the Easter Season, when it comes from the Acts of the Apostles). It was chosen in connection to the Gospel reading. (nb: this connection is sometimes tenuous).

The Responsorial Psalm

The response psalm is an opportunity for people to respond during the readings. It should be sung unless that is impossible.

It is often (but not always) chosen to fit with the Old Testament reading and the Gospel. Another psalm with a similar tone may be substituted if necessary.

The Second Reading (on Sundays and some feast days)

This reading is taken from the New Testament, frequently from the letters of Paul. This reading is usually a continuous reading from the same source from week to week. It was never intended to connect with the first reading or the Gospel reading (though sometimes it does so by accident).

The Gospel Acclamation

The Alleluia Acclamation is sung during the procession of the Book of Gospels from the Altar to the Ambo. (During Lent an acclamation other than the Alleluia is sung.) It should always be sung, never spoken. It takes the following format:

Cantor or Presider: sings the alleluia refrain

People: repeat the refrain

Cantor or Presider: sings the Gospel antiphon

All: repeat the refrain.

The Proclamation of the Gospel

Everything up to this point has been a buildup to the Gospel reading. An ordained person usually reads the Gospel according to the following format:

A few seconds of silence after the Gospel Acclamation concludes.
Then the reading begins:

(Deacon or Priest): The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you.

(Deacon, Priest

or any reader): A reading from the holy

Gospel According to.....

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the Gospel reading the reader pauses for a few seconds. Then says

(Deacon, Priest,

or any reader): The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Some important notes:

- Whenever an ordained person is present s/he should read the Gospel. If you are reading the Gospel for another homilist, you should ask that homilist prior to the reading if there are any important lines to emphasize.
- Always begin the gospel dialogue with energy, and engage the reading in the same manner

The Homily

The objective of the homily is to, having prepared thoroughly, break open the Word of God. This means to prayerfully come to what it is that the Lord is trying to say to the people in this place at this time through these readings; then shine a light on that by 1: getting people's attention; 2: pointing to the message; 3: make it relevant to our time and place. A homily in almost all cases should never exceed 8 minutes.

The Creed

This is our joint response in faith to the readings – together, with Christians throughout the world, we proclaim our basic beliefs in light of having our hearts opened by God's Word.

In our parish we then include our Parish Mission Statement.

The Prayer of the Faithful

With hearts and minds fully aware of our need for God, we make our prayers for the Church throughout the world, for the world, ourselves, and all in need.

NB: these formal prayers take the format with which you are familiar. It is important to note that prayers of the faithful need to be brief and to the point. This is not the time for personal sharing. It is also not the time for "news reports." (Someone came in late and just heard that a horrible thing happened – best not to announce it to everyone else during a prayer.)

The Sign of Christ's Peace

The proper understanding: This is a time when we greet each other with the profound Peace of Jesus. After his resurrection he always greeted his followers with "Peace be with you." This was his deep resurrection peace.

This is what we are supposed to be exchanging at this time as we prepare to transition to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

What actually happens: For better or worse, in the American Church and especially in smaller communities, this has become an opportunity for extended greetings. “Hey, how are you, I haven’t seen you in a while!” “How is Mabel doing, I heard she was ill.” Etc. etc. It is good that we reconnect - but it would be better if this were done when we arrive, rather than at this point. However, Marie and I feel that to correct this would most likely do more harm than good so, as in most American churches, we just let it take place.

In our Church the Liturgy of the Word
concludes with the Sign of Peace.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The overall objection of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is to do as he told us and remember Him.

To celebrate the Eucharist together is to actively participate in the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus, to recognize (re-cognize, re-member) him in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup, and to be nurtured by His Body and Blood, His Real Presence.

The main parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist are:
Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Table
Prayer over the Gifts
The Eucharistic Prayer
Communion
Prayer After Communion

Presentation and Preparation

The objective here is to formally prepare Jesus' table – a table to which we are all invited.

The reverence with which the acolyte or presider brings the various elements to the table, placing them carefully, sets the tone. Members from the assembly bring up the gifts, reminding us that these gifts come to us from God and belong to us all, as we offer them back to God.

The hymn during this time, if one is used, need not be somber, but neither should it be boisterous. It may be a piece that speaks to what we are doing, or it also might be a piece that connects what we have just heard in the Word to what we are about to do in the

Eucharist. Artistically, the right instrumental, reflective piece, sometimes accomplishes this well.

Prayer Over the Offerings

The dialogue prior to the prayer connects the just completed actions of the presider with the intent of the assembly, and the prayer, spoken from the 'orates' posture, brings it all together.

In our parish, it is at this point that the presider invites everyone up to the altar. The Eucharistic Ministers join the presider inside the altar rail as a way to connect everyone around one table, and not just the presider at the table.

The Eucharistic Prayer

These ancient prayers, when engaged properly, connect us to the whole church, invoke the Holy Spirit to come upon us and the gifts, lead us to recall Jesus' words and actions, bring us to the moment of consecration, and powerfully remind us that together with Jesus we are the Body of Christ.

The Preface

The dialogue before the preface should be engaged with energy to help people focus:

Presider: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you

Presider: Lift up your hearts!

People: We lift them up to the Lord!

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

People: It is right to give God thanks and Praise!

There are numerous prefaces – several for weekdays – seven different ones for Sundays

Many feasts have their own preface
Some Eucharistic Prayers have their own included

The Holy Holy

This prayer should always be sung, and said only when singing is not possible. In our parish we have always used a different set of Mass parts for each season, each year, so that people have become very familiar with them.

First half of the prayer, including Consecration

There are a number of selections for this prayer. This decision should be made prior to the liturgy, when the presider prepares. Any prayer can be used at any time; however, the reconciliation prayers are well suited to Lent, and the children's prayers are very appropriate when children are present.

[side note: In some small communities it has become the practice for the people to either read the entire Eucharistic Prayer, or just the words of consecration. Marie and I have always felt this is distracting to what is happening, for both the presider and the people. The Eucharistic Prayer belongs to everyone – but this is a dance, and everyone has a part. The presider is part of the assembly and reads the prayer clearly in the name of the assembly, so that everyone can focus on what is happening. Rubrics would say only the priest can read the Eucharistic Prayer; we would hold that it belongs to all, but that it is cumbersome and distracting for 30 or 100 people to be reading it with their heads buried in a book instead of actively watching.]

Mystery of Faith

This acclamation should always be sung. In our parish it is part of the set of Mass parts for the season.

Second half of prayer, ending with Doxology

This second half of the prayer typically includes prayers for the Church throughout the world, recalls our communion with the Saints, and includes prayers for the dead. It ends with the doxology (Through Christ, With Christ, In Christ,) which in our parish everyone says.

The Our Father

This is typically said in dialogue format:

Everyone: The Our Father.....deliver us from evil.

Presider: Deliver us, Mother, from every evil.....

Everyone: For the kingdom, the power....

An alternative on occasion, especially if it is running late, is to skip the middle presider's part and go right into "For the kingdom...."

Lamb of God/Fractioning Rite

The Lamb of God should be sung whenever possible. As it begins, the presider and Eucharistic Ministers break the bread, which is now the Body of the Lord, and pour the wine, which is now the Blood of the Lord.

Communion

This moment is often presented as the pinnacle of the Mass – the moment when we actively engage the presence of Christ in the Word, in the Eucharist, and in the Assembly as we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord. "May we become who we receive."

Prayer After Communion

This prayer, offered by the presider, brings the Liturgy of the Eucharist to conclusion. It is normally to be said standing. For practical reasons however, when there will be lengthy announcements and we wish people to remain seated, the presider may read the prayer seated. (nb: if this latter option is selected, simply begin the prayer – do not say “Let us pray.” Which will cause people to stand.

The Concluding Rites

(usually done standing)

The objective of the concluding rites is to remind us of what we have just done and send us forth into the world as Jesus’ Body to continue his mission.

Optional Announcements

These are obvious. A caution here is that people sometimes can get carried away and add significant time to the length of the liturgy. A reminder to check the bulletin can eliminate a lot of announcements.

Greeting and Blessing

Just as we began the liturgy formally, in the name of God, so we end it in the same way.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Presider: May almighty God bless us, Who Is Mother/Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Dismissal:

Dialogue

Presider: The Mass is ended. Let us go in Peace.

People: Thanks be to God.

Closing Hymn

This hymn typically should have a tone of praise or thanks to God, or of sending us forth to continue Jesus' mission in the world.