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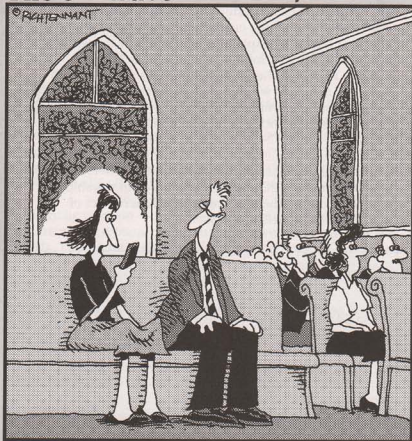
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Part II

Celebrating the Mysteries of Faith

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I'm not sure, but I think he just tweeted
the homily."

In this part . . .

Catholic ritual is mysterious, but in this part, you take a peek behind the curtain and see what's going on. This part begins by explaining why and how the whole person — body and soul — gets into the act during Catholic worship. The Seven Sacraments speak to both body and soul, and we give each of them — Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick — in-depth attention in this part.

In this part, you discover the connection between what's believed and how that belief is expressed in worship, especially during the most central and sacred act of worship in Catholicism: the Mass.

Chapter 7

Body and Soul: Worshipping Catholic Style

In This Chapter

- ▶ Worshipping God with both body and soul
 - ▶ Understanding Catholic gestures, objects, and symbols
 - ▶ Using the five senses to worship God
 - ▶ Getting a glimpse of the seven sacraments
-

One of the most familiar and yet mysterious aspects of Catholicism is its way of worship, which is chock-full of ancient rites and rituals. Catholic worship is based on the principle that humankind stands between the worlds of matter and spirit. In other words, human beings belong to both the material world, which the body interacts with through the five senses, and the spiritual world, which the soul interacts with by divine grace.

So Catholic worship — from kneeling to burning incense to using symbols — centers on the dynamic relationship between the material and spiritual worlds. This chapter shows you what worshipping Catholic style is all about.

Getting Your Body and Soul into the Act

Christians believe that a human being is made up of a body and a soul, both of which are created by God and are, therefore, good. In addition, because Jesus, the Son of God, had a human body and a human soul united in His divine nature, connecting the body and soul in worship is essential to the Catholic faith.

To capitalize on the dynamic relationship between body and soul — between the material world and the spiritual world — Catholic worship engages the entire human person in its rites and rituals.

✓ **Rites:** *Rites* are the necessary words and actions of a particular religious ceremony. For example, the Rite of Baptism requires that water be poured over the head (or that the person be immersed in water) while a priest says, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Each of the seven sacraments has its own proper rite.

On a broader scale, *rite* also refers to the four main Liturgical traditions (Roman, Antiochian, Alexandrian, and Byzantine or Constantinopolitan, which originated in the four patriarchates) in which the Holy Eucharist is celebrated (see Chapter 8).

✓ **Rituals:** *Rituals* are the official books that contain the essential words and actions of particular religious ceremonies. For example, the Roman Ritual is the book that priests and deacons use when they celebrate rites. It tells them what materials to use, what sequence of events to follow, and what words and actions to say when celebrating rites. The Roman Ritual used to be one volume, but it's now printed in individual volumes for each sacrament — one volume for performing weddings, one for funerals, one for Baptisms, and so on.

During a Catholic Mass, the priest and the congregation engage their bodies by speaking aloud and by sitting, standing, or kneeling. They also perceive tangible symbols that exist outside the body — the water used for baptizing, for example, or the oil used for anointing — through one or more of the five senses. These outward symbols and ritual actions remind the faithful of the internal action of invisible divine grace entering the human soul.

Understanding Some Symbols and Gestures

Kneeling and making the sign of the cross, hanging crosses depicting a crucified Jesus, and sprinkling holy water on this and that are telltale Catholic practices. In this section, we explain the meanings behind these symbols and gestures as they relate to the body and soul.

The sign of the cross

The most common Catholic gesture is the sign of the cross. Latin (Western) Catholics make the sign of the cross by using their right hand to touch the forehead, then the middle of the breast, then the left shoulder, and finally the right shoulder. As they make this gesture, they say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." This one complete gesture makes a cross. Eastern Catholics say the same thing as they make a similar sign of the cross; the only difference is that they go to the right shoulder first and then to the left.

No matter which shoulder Catholics touch first, the sign of the cross has the same meaning. It symbolically reaffirms two essential Christian doctrines: The Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and humankind's salvation through the cross of Christ.

The genuflection

Another telltale sign of Catholic worship is *genuflection*, which is the act of touching the right knee to the floor while bending the left knee, and making the sign of the cross at the same time.

Catholics genuflect only in front of the Holy Eucharist. Why? Because the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Jesus and Catholics want to show the ultimate form of respect by genuflecting or kneeling before Him. Catholic churches keep the Holy Eucharist in a large metal container or vault called a *tabernacle*, or sometimes they display the Eucharist behind glass in a gold container called a *monstrance*. (See Chapters 8 and 10 for more on the Eucharist and Chapter 19 for more on the tabernacle and monstrance.)

The crucifix

The *crucifix*, a cross bearing an image of Jesus being crucified, is a typical Catholic symbol. Protestant Christians usually have crosses with no *corpus* (that's Latin for *body*) of Jesus attached. The graphic symbol of the crucifix became predominant in the Western Church to remind Catholics that Jesus was true man as well as true God and that His suffering and death were very real and painful. The crucifix calls attention to the high price paid for humankind's sins and inspires believers to repent of their sins and be grateful for the salvation that Jesus offered through His death on the cross. The *rubrics* (liturgical laws for celebrating Mass) require a crucifix to be visible to the people during divine worship. The faithful are encouraged to have a crucifix in their homes, and many wear a small one around their neck to remind them of the supreme love Christ showed in dying for our sins.

Holy water

Holy water, which is water blessed by a priest, bishop, or deacon, is a *sacramental*, or a religious object or action that the Catholic Church — not Jesus — created. (To find out more about sacramentals, see Chapter 19.) Helpful and beneficial but totally optional, sacramentals are subordinate to the seven sacraments, which are necessary for believers to live a life made holy by the gift of grace from God. In other words, sacraments give grace no matter what the spiritual state of the recipient. For example, a groom who is in the state of mortal sin when he gets married (the Sacrament of Matrimony) is still validly



married. On the other hand, a groom who has a mortal sin on his soul gets no grace from the blessing (a sacramental) the priest gives to the newly married couple after they pronounce their vows.

Think of the sacraments as food for the soul and sacramentals as supplemental vitamins.

Holy water is the most widely used sacramental. Non-Catholics may think of holy water as the stuff that burned the face of the possessed 12-year-old in the movie *The Exorcist*. Although the Church does use holy water to drive out demons on rare occasions (see Chapter 19), it more regularly uses holy water to *sanctify* (bless) objects, to protect people from supernatural evil, and to serve as a symbolic reminder of Baptism.

When entering or leaving a church, Catholics dip their right hand, usually with two fingers, into a *font*, a cup of holy water that's on a wall near the doors of the church. Then they make the sign of the cross, wetting their forehead, breast, and shoulders. In doing so, they visibly remind themselves that they're entering the House of God. Plus, blessing with holy water is good preparation for worship.

Catholics also take small quantities of holy water home with them to fill fonts on their walls. They then bless themselves whenever leaving home, because the home is the *domestic Church* for Catholics. Home is where the family lives, and it's from the family that the Church grows and lives. After all, priests, deacons, and bishops must come from families, and churches can't grow without the families who attend church and support them.

At some Masses, the priest sprinkles holy water on the congregation in place of the Penitential Rite. (See Chapter 10 for what's what at the Mass.) And anytime a priest or deacon blesses a religious article, such as rosary beads, a statue, or a medal of one of the saints, he sprinkles holy water on the object after saying the prayers of blessing. The holy water reminds the owner that the object is now reserved for sacred use — to enhance prayer life, for example — and shouldn't be used for profane (nonreligious) use. This is why the blessed cup, called a *chalice*, that the priest uses at Mass to hold the wine that he consecrates can't be used for any other purpose, like to drink wine or juice at the dinner table.



In case you're wondering, a priest, bishop, or deacon blesses holy water when they celebrate in the church, particularly at the Easter Vigil (or Holy Saturday night), which takes place the evening before Easter Sunday. They can also bless holy water anytime during the year when the quantity runs out or evaporates.

Sensing God

Catholic worship incorporates all five senses — sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. Catholics believe that they can't see, feel, smell, hear, or taste the internal action of divine grace entering the human soul. But because the senses can perceive external symbols, Catholics can use many external symbols for the human body to perceive while the soul receives the divine grace.

Through sight

If you've been blessed with a good set of eyes, you gather more information by the sense of sight than any other. From the words you read to the pictures and images you look at, the ability to see impacts your perception of the world significantly.

Depicting God

Catholicism teaches that God the Father has no human body. He's pure spirit and totally invisible. But because of the importance of sight, people have felt the need to represent God visually somehow — to create a visible symbol of the invisible God. One problem with representing visible symbols of God is that the First Commandment forbids *graven images*, which are objects of worship, or idols.

The pagans, such as the ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, had many gods and goddesses, which they represented in stone or metal and worshipped. The Hebrew people, on the other hand, were one of the few ancient cultures to have a *monotheistic* religion (*mono* meaning *one* and *theos* meaning *god*). Although their pagan counterparts had plenty of idols to worship, the Hebrews were forbidden from making an image or idol of God.

From Abraham until Moses, no one even knew the name *God*. He was the *nameless* or *ineffable One*. This invisible, imageless deity was different from pagan gods because he had no name. According to the ancient way of thinking, after a person knew the name of the god — or of the evil spirit or demon, for that matter — he could control it somehow. So invoking the name and having an image of the god gave the believer some influence over that being. But the one true God had no name and couldn't be depicted by any image.

After paganism died out in Western culture and the Roman Empire embraced Christianity, the danger of distorting the nature of the one true God evaporated. After God the Son took on a human nature in the person of Jesus, who had a real and true human body, fear about symbolically representing God the Father or God the Holy Spirit in Christian art disappeared.

Today, you can see God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit portrayed in paintings on walls and canvases, as well as in stained glass. God is most often represented in visible form as follows:

- ✓ *God the Father* is usually depicted as an old man with a long flowing beard, an image that came from the early Europeans. In modern and contemporary Christian art, however, artists also represent God the Father with Asian or African features, for example. The modern reasoning is that if God is a spirit, why portray Him just as a Caucasian man?
- ✓ *Jesus (God the Son)* had a face and a body, but with no pictures of Him to draw from, artists have used their own creativity to depict the Savior — often as a young man with a full beard. Many works of art have been modeled on the image of the Shroud of Turin, which is considered by many to be the actual burial cloth of Jesus and has a miraculous image of His face and body on it.
- ✓ *God the Holy Spirit* is almost always portrayed as a dove because the Bible speaks of a dove descending on Jesus at His baptism by John the Baptist.

Conveying meaning through colors and symbols

The Catholic Church uses symbols to show us the connection of the material and spiritual worlds because human beings are both body and soul. One of the most well-known symbols used in the Catholic Church is the stained-glass window. Some of the most popular churches, like St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris (not the football shrine), contain hundreds of magnificent stained-glass windows full of color, light, and symbolism.

Originally, churches used stained-glass windows to teach the Catholic faith to illiterate peasants. Unable to read, these peasants could look at the pictures and symbols depicted in the stained glass and learn all about salvation history from biblical stories to Church history to the seven sacraments.

You see another important symbol in the priest's garb. Depending on the occasion, priests and deacons wear different-colored liturgical *vestments* (garments for worship services) for Mass — green, white, red, purple, black, rose, or gold. Vestments often have symbols on them, such as a cross; the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (the *alpha* and *omega*), which represent Jesus, who is the beginning and the end; and the letter *M* for Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Marble altars and floors often include engraved symbols, such as

- ✓ **Two keys:** This image symbolizes St. Peter and comes from the Gospel of Matthew, which describes Jesus entrusting the keys of the kingdom to Peter.
- ✓ **An eagle:** This symbol represents St. John the Evangelist (see Chapter 4 for more details).
- ✓ **A pelican pecking her own heart to feed her young with her blood:** This image symbolizes Christ, who feeds Catholics with His blood in Holy Communion.

In addition, Catholic architecture and art use visual symbols to enhance the faith. For example, the gothic cathedrals spiral up toward heaven to remind the faithful to remember their destiny in the next world — and not to get too comfortable in this earthly one. To literally see the beauty of Catholic worship, you can visit the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama (see Chapter 22). The marble, the gold, the stained glass, the light, the altar, the tabernacle, and especially the 7-foot-tall monstrance surrounded by gold and jewels all attract the human eye and inspire the human soul to aspire to heaven. These symbols, which are attractive to the five senses, also help the soul transcend the material world into the spiritual realm.

Through touch

Just as no one has seen God because He's invisible, no one has touched Him either. Yet everyone knows how vital the sense of touch is to human beings from the moment they're born. Being held by a parent and feeling tender, loving hands offers a sense of security.

Like the sense of sight, the sense of touch is also an important part of Catholic worship. For instance, each of the following sacraments incorporates the sense of touch in some way:

- ✓ **Baptism:** You literally feel the water that the priest pours over your head.
- ✓ **Anointing of the Sick:** You feel the oil that the priest applies to your forehead and the palms of your hands.
- ✓ **Matrimony:** The bride and groom join right hands before pronouncing their vows.
- ✓ **Confirmation:** You feel the chrism oil being put on your forehead.
- ✓ **Holy Orders:** Men being ordained feel the two hands of the bishop touching the top of their heads.

A priest's vestments of many colors

A priest's colorful vestments (Latin Rite) help Catholics know which celebrations are at hand:

- ✓ **Green:** The color of vestments used during ordinary time.
- ✓ **Purple or violet:** Used during Advent and Lent.
- ✓ **White or gold:** Most appropriate for Christmas and Easter.
- ✓ **Red:** Worn on feasts of the Passion of Jesus and for the Holy Spirit, representing red tongues of fire, in addition to being worn

for the feasts of martyred saints, who shed their red blood for Christ.

- ✓ **Rose:** May be worn as a sign of anticipated joy on the third Sunday of Advent and the fourth Sunday of Lent. If you take the somber color of purple or violet and brighten it with some white, it changes into rose; hence the notion of using this color as a visible sign that Christmas or Easter is soon to come.
- ✓ **Black:** May be worn for funeral Masses (as can purple or white) and on All Souls' Day.

We go into the nitty-gritty details about each of the sacraments in Chapters 8 and 9. Another way that Catholics embrace the sense of touch in prayer is by saying the Rosary (see Chapter 16). They can feel the beads as they pray the Hail Marys and meditate on the mysteries of Jesus and Mary. Catholics also encounter the sense of touch on Ash Wednesday when they feel the ashes of burnt palms (from last year's Palm Sunday) being spread on their foreheads in the sign of the cross. On the Feast of St. Blaise, which is February 3 (see Chapter 19), Catholics feel two crossed candles on their throats when the priest blesses them. Plus, holy water fonts are at every entrance and exit of Catholic churches, so believers can touch the holy water with their right hands and bless themselves.

Through smell

The sense of smell is as much a part of human beings as the other four senses, so Catholic worship also appeals to this function of the body.

Burning incense

The most obvious appeal to the nose in Catholic worship involves burning *incense*, which is the powder or crystalline form you get when you dry the aromatic resins of certain trees. When you place incense on burning charcoal, it produces a visible smoke and a recognizable aroma that fills the church. The smoke represents prayers going up to heaven, and the sweet aroma reminds people of the sweetness of God's divine mercy.



Incense has been a part of worship since biblical times. In the Old Testament, Psalm 141 speaks of prayers rising up to heaven "as incense." God commanded Moses to burn incense on the altar before the Ark of the Covenant, which held the Ten Commandments.

On a more practical level, churches burned incense in the Middle Ages when they didn't have decent air circulation and parishioners didn't wear deodorant. On a hot summer Sunday, the smell in the church became quite potent unless the clergy burnt plenty of incense and thoroughly swung it around the entire congregation. Yep, in pre-air-freshener days, incense was the best thing going. Keep in mind, though, that this practical application of incense didn't take away from its symbolic significance.

Incense remains an integral part of Catholic worship today. Eastern Orthodox Catholics use incense every day and every week during liturgical worship. Latin (Western) Catholics may use it on special holy days (like Easter and Christmas), maybe once a week at Sunday Mass, and almost always at Catholic funerals.

Note: At funerals, Catholics burn incense at the coffin as well as the altar because the body was a temple of the Holy Spirit when the soul lived inside. Jesus will reunite the body with its soul at the resurrection of the dead.

Anointing with oil

Another familiar smell to Catholics is *chrism oil*, sometimes called *oil of chrism*. Chrism is olive oil that the local diocesan bishop has blessed. Catholic worship uses this oil to consecrate bishops, anoint the hands of priests, confirm Catholics, baptize Catholics, bless bells, and consecrate altars and churches. The strong but pleasant odor comes from *balsam*, an aromatic perfume that's added to the oil.



The local bishop blesses three oils during Holy Week (the week before Easter) at a special Mass called the *Chrism Mass*, or *Mass of the Oils*. At this special Mass, the bishop blesses Chrism Oil, the Oil of the Sick, and the Oil of Catechumens. The bishop blesses all three olive oils in multigallon containers. Then he distributes the oil to the priests and deacons of the diocese. Chrism oil is the only one that has balsam added to it.

Through sound

Catholics use their sense of hearing in worship by listening to the Word of God read aloud. Catholics hear the words of the Bible read aloud at every Catholic Mass, whether it's Sunday or daily Mass. Readings come only from the Bible because Catholics believe that no other poetry or prose can replace

the inspired Word of God. The readings come from both the Old and New Testaments. After the Old Testament reading and before the New Testament Epistle reading, the congregation normally sings or recites a Psalm. Then, after the Epistle reading, the priest or deacon reads a passage from one of the four Gospels. In addition, many of the hymns Catholics sing throughout the Mass are based on scriptural citations.

Although the words of Scripture are the primary way that Catholic worship incorporates the sense of hearing, the prayers of the priest and congregation are also important, so the congregation pays attention to these prayers and responds at the appropriate times. The *homily*, or sermon, that the priest, deacon, or bishop gives immediately after the Gospel is another important sense-of-sound part of the Catholic Mass because it offers the congregation an application of the Gospel.

The Catholic Church also uses plenty of music, especially organ music, choirs, and *Gregorian chant* (Latin chant named after Pope St. Gregory the Great, who was pope from A.D. 590–604). The beautiful sounds of the pipe organ and the delicate tones of the human voice are also reminders of God that the congregation can physically hear.

Through taste



Catholicism even employs the sense of taste in its worship at Communion time. The Holy Eucharist is the most important, sacred, and pivotal aspect of Catholic worship because it is when the bread and wine become the real, true, and substantial body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ. The appearance of the bread and wine appeals to and is perceived by the sense of taste.

When it's time for Communion, believers receive the Holy Eucharist, which still tastes like unleavened bread and grape wine. (The Latin Church uses unleavened bread, but the Eastern Church uses leavened bread.) The believers' sense of taste doesn't perceive the change of substance, hence the term *transubstantiation* (see Chapter 10), from bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ — which is definitely a good thing because if the Holy Eucharist tasted like flesh and blood, no one would take it.



The appearances of the bread and wine during Communion are sometimes called the *accidents*, but they have nothing to do with mishaps or car crashes. Catholic theology uses the philosophical term *accident* to distinguish outward appearances from the invisible but underlying essence.