

## What changes?

We believe that a complete change takes place in the elements offered to God in the Mass. What were bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood. Theologians call this change *transubstantiation* — a change in the very substance. That is why Catholics usually prefer not to refer to the consecrated gifts as "bread" and "wine." Sometimes they will refer to the "host" (using an ancient sacrificial term) for the species of bread and "the Precious Blood" to refer to the contents of the chalice. But in either species, Christ is entirely and truly present.

## Communion under one or both forms?

In some Masses, you'll see the congregation receiving Communion under the species of both bread and wine. In others, they receive only the host. Is receiving both better?

No. Christ is really and completely present in both elements. Whether both elements are offered or just the host is a decision the bishops make on practical grounds, but either way we receive the fullness of Christ — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

## When do I have to go to Mass?

The Church requires us to go to Mass every Sunday.

We're also required to go to Mass on certain holy days determined by the bishops, which because of that requirement are called *holy days of obligation*.

In many parishes, there is a Mass on Saturday evening (an "Anticipated Mass" or "Mass of Anticipation") that will fulfill the Sunday obligation. But going to Mass on other days during the week — which is a very good idea — does not relieve us of the Sunday obligation. We still have to go on Sunday (or Saturday evening), even if we went on Thursday.



## How often am I allowed to go to Mass?

As often as you like! Many people go to Mass every day, and there's no reason not to go more often. There is a limit on Holy Communion, however: we may not take Holy Communion more than twice in one day.

## Latin or English?

The official language of the "Latin Rite" Mass — the Mass used by Western Catholic churches — is Latin, but it's usually translated from the original Latin into the language of the people. Up to the 1960s, even ordinary parish churches always celebrated the Mass in Latin. Now, priests have the option of celebrating Mass in Latin or the common (vernacular) language. But whether it's in Latin, English, Korean, Spanish, or any other language, the Mass is still the same Mass, and still just as much a miracle.

## Scripture in the Mass

The better you know Scripture, the more you'll recognize passages from Scripture in the Mass. Scripture itself belongs in the Mass: the Bible is fundamentally the list of books suited for reading in the liturgy, as we do in the Liturgy of the Word at every Mass (see **Parts of the Mass**). There are three or four extended Scripture readings in every Mass. Here are just a few of the other Scripture passages that form part of our Mass:

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

Matthew 28:19

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you: Romans 16:20

Glory to God in the highest: Luke 2:14

Holy, holy, holy: Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8

Our Father: Matthew 6:9-13

Lamb of God: John 1:29

Lord, I am not worthy: Luke 7:6-7



## A Timeline of Mass History

IN THE BEGINNING: God creates humanity as priests, "by nature . . . religious beings" (CCC 44).

ca. 2000 B.C.: Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, brings Abraham bread and wine.

ca. 1050 B.C.: King David codifies Israelite liturgy.

ca. 1000 B.C.: King Solomon builds the Temple.

ca. 30 A.D.: Jesus Christ institutes the Mass at the Last Supper.

ca. 30 A.D.: First Christians devote themselves "to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

ca. 45 A.D.: St. Paul gives the Corinthians instructions for celebrating Mass in 1 Corinthians 10-11.

90s A.D.: St. Clement of Rome instructs the faraway Corinthian Church on conduct during Mass.

ca. 100: Instructions for celebrating Mass written down in the *Didache*.

ca. 112: Pliny the Younger, a pagan Roman governor, investigates Christianity, reports to Emperor Trajan on the Christians' Eucharistic celebrations.

ca. 155: St. Justin Martyr describes, in detail, the Mass as celebrated in Rome. It is substantially the same form we use today.

ca. 385: St. Ambrose describes the liturgy as "Mass" (*missa*) — the earliest known writer to use the term that way.

ca. 600: Pope St. Gregory the Great standardizes the prayers of the Mass and promotes careful celebration of the rites.

1545-1563: Council of Trent addresses Protestant errors regarding the Mass.

1570: Tridentine Mass published; this will be the form of the Mass in the Latin Rite until the Mass of Pope Paul VI in 1969.

1962-1965: Second Vatican Council promotes a rediscovery of ancient sources of liturgy, allows Mass in vernacular languages.

1969: Mass of Pope Paul VI (the "Novus Ordo") published; this is the ordinary form of the Mass in the Latin Rite churches today.

1973: English translation of Mass prepared by ICEL.

2000: Pope John Paul II promulgates the third edition of the Latin *Roman Missal*.

2011: New English translation of Mass produced to more accurately reflect original Latin text.

## The Mass in Scripture

Scripture tells the story of salvation history: God's plan to save us from our own sin. The Mass is the climax of salvation history, in which the sacrifice of Christ on the cross happens on our altar. So Scripture is filled with references to the Mass, both in the Old Testament and in the New.

### Old Testament: Foreshadowing the Mass

Throughout the Old Testament, we see signs of the Mass to come. The Mass didn't just appear out of nowhere; it stands at the end of a long story we call Salvation History.

**God's earliest people** offered sacrifices to the Lord, both to atone for their sins and to give God thanks for his salvation.

**Melchizedek**, priest of God Most High, brought Abraham bread and wine. New Testament writers see Melchizedek as a foreshadowing of Christ (see Hebrews 7).

**The Passover sacrifice** foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ, which saves us from death and bondage to sin.

**The Law of Moses** prescribed sacrificial rites for all Israel, again foreshadowing the perfect sacrifice of our Christian Mass.

**The Psalms** brought the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving to the fore — a sacrifice that Greek-speaking Jews would know as "the thanksgiving" (*eucharistia*, from which we get "Eucharist").

**The prophet Malachi** foretold a time when a pure sacrifice would be offered to the Lord all over the earth (Malachi 1:11).

### New Testament: The Apostles Celebrate the Mass

**Jesus Christ** told his disciples that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:53-56).

**At the Last Supper**, Christ instituted the Mass when he said "This is my Body" and "This is my Blood" (see Matthew 26:26-28).

**On the road to Emmaus**, Jesus' followers recognized him in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:13-35).

**The Apostles** celebrated the Mass with the very first Christians (Acts 2:42).

**Before the Gospels** were written down, St. Paul wrote an account of the Last Supper and gave the Corinthians instructions for celebrating the Mass (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

**The Letter to the Hebrews** put the Mass in the context of salvation history.

**Revelation** showed how the Mass on earth is part of the worship that goes on constantly and forever in heaven.

## The Vestments

Priests who celebrate Mass wear special clothes with symbolic meanings. Most of these clothes go back to Imperial Roman times (ca. 140-180 A.D.), when they were what a man would wear for a formal occasion.

**Chasuble.** The outer cloak, usually in the liturgical color for the season.

**Alb.** The long, plain white garment worn by priests and others who serve in the Mass.

**Stole.** A scarf-like cloth, usually in the liturgical color of the season. A bishop wears it over his chasuble; a priest under his chasuble; a deacon wears it diagonally.

## The Vessels

We use special vessels for the Body and Blood of Christ. Like the vestments, most of them come from Roman times. The Church adopted the kinds of dishes that were used at a formal dinner, and adapted them to her own use.



The bread is offered on a **paten**, a broad plate-like dish.



When the host is taken out of the church to the sick, it's carried in a **pyx**, which is Greek for "box."



For Eucharistic adoration, hosts can be placed in a **monstrance**, a shrine that shows the host to the congregation.



The wine is offered in a **chalice**, which is like a large wine glass.



Consecrated hosts for the congregation are kept in a **ciborium**, which looks like a wide chalice with a lid.



After Mass, consecrated hosts are kept in the **tabernacle**, a beautifully decorated box that often sits on a smaller altar.

## The Building

A church building may be in almost any shape, from a cross to an octagon. But Catholic churches have the same fundamental parts.

The **narthex** or vestibule is where we enter the church.

The **nave** is the main part of the church. It's called "nave" from the Latin word for a ship, as if it were a great ship in which we are all passengers.

The **chancel** or **sanctuary** is the part of the church where the altar and the tabernacle stand.

The **altar** is where the sacrifice of the Eucharist is offered. The congregation faces the altar, which is the focal point of the Mass. Often the altar is built over the relic of a saint. If there's more than one altar in the church, we distinguish the main altar where Mass is offered as the High Altar.

The **ambo**, **lectern**, or **pulpit** (terms can be used interchangeably) is where all Scripture readings are done.

Located near the chancel is a **sacristy**, where the sacred vessels and vestments are kept and prepared for the Mass.

Flip to back to continue.

# Mass Prayers and Responses

(Text in bold represents the wording that has changed in the Roman Missal.)

## Greeting

Priest: *The Lord be with you.*

People: **And with your spirit.**

## Penitential Act, Form A (Confiteor)

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.

## Penitential Act, Form B

Priest: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

People: **For we have sinned against you.**

Priest: **Show us, O Lord, your mercy.**

People: And grant us your salvation.

## Gloria

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.

## At the Gospel

Deacon (or Priest): *A reading from the holy Gospel according to N.*

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

## 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,  
**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.

**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.



### Apostles' Creed

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

and in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, our Lord,  
**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.

### Mystery of Faith

(formerly the Memorial Acclamation)

Priest: *The mystery of faith.*

People:

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

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

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

### Suscipiat Dominus

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.

### Preface Dialogue

Priest: *The Lord be with you.*

People: **And with your spirit.**

Priest: *Lift up your hearts.*

People: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

Priest: *Let us give thanks*  
*to the Lord our God.*

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

### Sanctus

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.

### Sign of Peace

Priest: *The peace of the Lord*  
*be with you always.*

People: **And with your spirit.**

### Ecce Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

Priest: **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.

### Concluding Rites

Priest: *The Lord be with you.*

People: **And with your spirit.**

## The Early Christians on the Mass

Christ said "This is my Body" and "This is my Blood" at the Last Supper (about 30 A.D.), and we can see from the writings they left that the early Christians believed his words. From the first generation on, they revered the consecrated bread and wine as the true Body and Blood of Christ. They saw the Mass as a true sacrifice, and Holy Communion as the sacrament that united the whole Church.

Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

— Didache 9, about 100 A.D.

Every Lord's day gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanks after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.

— Didache 14, about 100 A.D.

We should do all things in their proper order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at the stated times. He has commanded offerings to be presented and services to be performed, not in a thoughtless or irregular way, but at the appointed times and hours.

— St. Clement of Rome, *To the Corinthians*, about 90 A.D.

Let no man deceive himself. For both the beings of heaven, the glorious angels, and the rulers, both seen and unseen, incur condemnation if they do not believe in the blood of Christ.

— St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyrnaeans* 6, about 100 A.D.

We do not receive these as common bread and drink. For Jesus Christ our Savior, made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation. Likewise, we have been taught that the food blessed by the prayer of his word — and from which our own blood and flesh are nourished and changed — is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh.

— St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66, about 155 A.D.

For the bread, which is produced from the earth, is no longer common bread, once it has received the invocation of God: it is then the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly.

— St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4.18.5, about 180 A.D.

After the cup has been blessed in the name of God, you receive it as the anointing of the blood of Christ. So spill nothing from it. May no strange spirit lap it up because you despised it and rendered yourself guilty of the blood of Christ — like a man who despises the price with which he has been ransomed.

— Apostolic Tradition, about 215 A.D.



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## More to Read

Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians*. How the Mass was celebrated by the first Christians, as we read it in their own writings (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

———, *Praying in the Presence of Our Lord with St. Thomas Aquinas*. Surprisingly down-to-earth prayers for Eucharistic Adoration from one of the greatest minds in human history (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002).

———, *Fire of God's Love: 120 reflections on the Eucharist*. Great Catholic thinkers through the ages reflect on the meaning of the miracle on our altar (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009).

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———, *The How-To Book of the Mass, Revised and Expanded*. How to get something out of the Mass every time (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*. What it means to say that every single Mass is heaven on earth (Doubleday Religion, 1999).

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