

Liturgy Planning and Mass Participation

Parts of the Mass:

When your extended family / friends have a formal meal (at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, a special occasion), what do they do?

- 1) they gather together; 2) they tell stories about what's been going on in their lives;
- 3) they go to the table, say grace, pass the food and eat and drink. 4) they say their good-byes and leave.

After the resurrection, Jesus comes upon the disciples walking to Emmaus and what do they do?

- 1) they gather together; 2) they tell their story and recall the Scriptures;
- 3) they recognize Jesus in the "breaking of bread" 4) they dash back to Jerusalem to share their joy with the other disciples.

In the early church, people met in one another's homes to celebrate Jesus and the "breaking of the bread" and they did the same 4 things: Gathered together, Told Stories of Jesus and from Scripture, Broke Bread, and Said their goodbyes and left.

This is where the Mass comes from. Let's take a closer look at part of the mass:

1. We gather together (Gathering Rites)
 - A. Entering the Church
 - a. Greeters and/or greeting one another
 - b. Holy Water
 - c. Genuflection
 - d. Quiet Reflection / Reading in Preparation for the Mass
 - B. Mass Begins
 - a. Lector Introduces the theme of the mass
 - b. All stand and sing the opening prayer (our joyful greeting for our host – Jesus represented by the cross that is carried as the altar servers, priest and deacon process in)
 - c. We take some time to recall our common need for salvation
 - d. We sing our Glory to God (except during Advent and Lent)
 - C. The gathering rite closes with a prayer and we respond Amen and sit down.
2. We tell/listen to stories (Liturgy of the Word)
 - A. We listen as the Lector tells us a story from the Old Testament (recalling the origins of our covenant)
 - B. We join with the Cantor in singing a Psalm (a song from God's own inspired hymnal)
 - C. We listen again as the Lector tells us another story from the New Testament; a story from the disciples who spread the faith after Jesus' resurrection.
 - D. Then the priest or deacon gets ready to proclaim the Gospel (the Good News)
 - a. We stand in reverence to hear these words; since they came from Jesus himself
 - b. We sing the alleluia (except during Lent)
 - c. The priest or deacon greets us with "The Lord be with You", he introduces the Gospel reading while marking a cross on his forehead, lips, and heart while praying silently that God cleans his mind and his heart so that his lips may worthily proclaim the Gospel. We perform this ritual with him.
 - E. We listen to the Homily. The Homily takes the Biblical word and applies it to our life situation today. It breaks open the word so it can be received and digested by the congregation.

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- F. Then we proclaim our faith by reciting the Creed
 - G. The Liturgy of the Word ends with the General Intercessions where we pray for special needs of the world, the country, the community, the parish, individuals in the parish.
3. Meal Sharing (Liturgy of the Eucharist). After the readings we move to the table. As at a meal in the home of a friend, we 1) set the table, 2) say grace, and 3) share the food (eat and drink).
- A. Preparation of the Gifts – set the table
 - a. the early Christians each brought some bread and wine from their homes to be used for the mass and to be given to the clergy and the poor. To emulate that, we take a collection to support the church which they use for a variety of purposes. Then members of the parish bring the offerings to the altar with the bread and wine.
 - b. The priest places the bread and wine on the table, mixes water with the wine and washes his hands (these are things that Jews, like Jesus, did at meals so they remind us of the ritual Jesus would have performed)
 - c. Finally the priest invites us to pray that the sacrifice may be acceptable to God
 - B. Eucharistic Prayer – say grace
 - a. Invitation –
 - i. the priest greets us, then asks if we are ready and willing to approach the table and renew our baptismal commitment, offering ourselves to God (“Lift up your hearts”) we respond that we are ready “We lift them up to the Lord.”
 - ii. we are invited to give thanks to the Lord our God (our host for the banquet) and we respond that it is right and just. To “give thanks” is what Eucharist means
 - b. Preface and Acclamation – the priest says the preface, a prayer which prepares us to come before the face of God. As the wonders of God are told, the assembly cannot hold back their joy and sing aloud “Wow! Wow! Wow! What a God we have!” In the ritual language of the Mass this acclamation takes the form of “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.”
 - c. Consecration – this is the most **awe-inspiring** part of the mass **your eyes should be riveted on the altar and you should be totally absorbed in what is taking place before your eyes.**
 - i. The priest gives praise and thanks, makes a sign of the cross over the gifts and calls upon the Holy Spirit to change our gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.
 - ii. He then recalls the events of the Last Supper. And we are called to proclaim the mystery of our faith (When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory).
 - d. Prayer for unity and intercessions –
 - i. the priest then prays for unity (“partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit”).
 - ii. He adds prayers for the Pope, Bishop, clergy, living and dead that we may one day join at the table in heaven of which this table is only a hint and a taste.
 - iii. The priest raises the consecrated bread and wine and offers a toast (“Through him, with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor is yours forever and ever”. We respond with a resounding Amen (acclaiming our agreement and participation in the Eucharistic Prayer).
 - C. Communion – share the food

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- a. Our Father and Sign of Peace -- we prepare to eat and drink at the Lord's table with the words Jesus taught us. And then cognizant that communion means "union with" we make a gesture of union and forgiveness with those around us and offer them a sign of peace.
 - b. Invitation to Communion – the priest shows us the Body of Christ and invites us to come to the table. And, we approach the altar ready to receive the food for our souls.
 - c. Communion – as God fed our ancestors manna in the desert on their pilgrimage, He gives us food for our spiritual journey.
 - i. We approach the minister who gives us the Eucharistic bread and respond Amen to "The Body of Christ".
 - ii. We then approach the minister who gives us the Cup and respond Amen to "The Blood of Christ".
 - iii. During this procession we usually sing a hymn which unites our voices, minds, and thoughts as the Body and Blood of Christ unites us into the Body of Christ. Then we pray silently in our hearts, thanking and praising God and asking for all that this sacrament promises.
4. Good-bye and Leave Taking (Commissioning) – we prepare to go back to that world in which we will live for the coming week. Strengthened by this Eucharis, we are better prepared to take up the burdens of our daily lives.
- A. Announcements – announcements about upcoming parish events or important activities are made. Then the priest says "The Lord be with you"
 - B. Blessing and Dismissal – we bow our heads to receive a blessing and we make the sign of the cross with reverence as if it was the last of your life.
 - C. Living the Eucharist in the world – We leave the assembly with light hearts full of the joy of God singing our final hymn. We leave the church building but we carry something with us. What happens in our lives during the week gives deeper meaning to the ritual actions we have celebrated at Mass. It is only in relation to our daily lives that the full meaning of the ritual actions of the Mass becomes clear to us.