

Introduction

During Lent, by almsgiving, prayer and fasting we reflect on the Kingly, Priestly and Prophetic Mission given to us in Baptism, when we became members of Christ's body, the Church, called to share his life to the fullest. Our communion with God and with one another is expressed most beautifully when we gather, in our parishes and other communities, to celebrate the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Church's life.

This booklet will help us reflect on the centrality of the Eucharist in our lives, and to prepare us to receive the Precious Blood from the Chalice once again in our Diocese, beginning with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday this year.

Pope Francis describes our parishes as places of welcome, 'schools of service and generosity, with their doors always open: to those who are excluded, and those included – to all.' Let us pray that our celebration of the Eucharist will lead them to be such places.



The Introductory Rites

WE GATHER We gather as one – we may arrive at our churches individually or as families, but we gather as one.

Why do we celebrate Mass on Sundays?

Sunday is the Lord's Day – the day of Creation and the day of Resurrection! We are an Easter People, and 'Alleluia' is our song! And so we are obliged, out of our love for God and neighbour, to gather on Sunday to celebrate Mass, and also to rest. But if we cannot gather, e.g., because we are ill, the obligation does not apply.

How do we prepare to celebrate Mass?

We should also gather in good time so that we can bless ourselves with holy water, genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, find our place and settle down ready to celebrate Mass. Pope Francis teaches us that 'The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak;' we should also be properly disposed to celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion, examining our consciences and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation if we are conscious of having committed grave sin – priests are available in all our parishes to hear confessions.

The Liturgy of the Word

WE LISTEN In the Liturgy of the Word we listen as one – to the First Reading, from the Old Testament or Acts of the Apostles, the Second Reading, from the New Testament, the Gospel and the Homily, responding in the Psalm, Profession of Faith and Prayer of the Faithful.

How do we listen carefully?

It can be quite a challenge to listen attentively to all the readings at Mass! We should listen to the readings, join in the prayers, sing the hymns and take part in the silence as best we can. One good way of preparing is to read the Sunday readings beforehand so that we're ready to hear them in church. St Jerome says that 'Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ'.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

WE OFFER In the Presentation of the Offerings and Eucharistic Prayer, we offer as one, taking part in the sacrifice of praise, for the Mass remembers the Last Supper as Sacrament, re-presents the Crucifixion as Sacrifice, and looks forward to the Resurrection as Celebration.

What do we call the bread and the wine?

Before the Consecration, when the Celebrant says 'Take this, all of you, and eat of it...' and 'Take this, all of you, and drink from it...' it is bread and wine. But after the Consecration it is the Body of Christ under the appearance of bread and the Blood of Christ under the appearance of wine, and so we should call it the Body of Christ' or 'the Sacred Host' and the Blood of Christ or 'the Precious Blood'.



WE RECEIVE In the Communion Rite, we receive as one. We say the Lord's Prayer, exchange a sign of peace and kneel to prepare ourselves to receive Holy Communion, making sure that we are properly disposed to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, God's greatest gift that keeps on giving. **"The Body of Christ: Amen. The Blood of Christ: Amen."**

How do we receive Holy Communion?

We process forward to the Altar, bow before the Sacred Host and say 'Amen' when the minister says, 'The Body of Christ'. We receive it on the tongue, or on the palm and place it on our tongue straight away. Then we consume it immediately. If we are receiving the Precious Blood, we bow before the Chalice and say 'Amen' when the minister says, 'The Blood of Christ'. We take the Chalice, consume the Precious Blood and return it to the minister. We then return to our place, kneel or sit, and make our thanksgiving.

Do we have to receive Holy Communion from the Chalice?

The Church teaches that the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is present in both the Sacred Host and Precious Blood, and so there is no obligation to receive Holy Communion from the Chalice. However, the Eucharist is a sign of our unity in our diversity as the body of Christ, and so the Church teaches that Holy Communion 'has a fuller sign when it takes place under both kinds, for in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord'. However, 'Christ, whole and entire, and the true Sacrament, is received even under only one species, and hence that as regards the resulting fruits, those who receive under only one species are not deprived of any grace that is necessary for salvation'.

What if I cannot receive Holy Communion?

If you have not received your First Holy Communion, or if for another reason you cannot receive Holy Communion, many people go forward to receive a blessing, indicating their intention by crossing their arms. We all receive God's blessing at the end of Mass, but processing to the Altar could be a way of making 'a spiritual communion' –and getting young children used to processing to the Altar with their families.

What do we do when we get back to our seats?

We should kneel or sit and make our thanksgiving, either by singing the hymn or by praying quietly, maybe saying, 'O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine,' or 'Lord Jesus, make me a better person, more considerate towards others, more honest with myself and more faithful to you.'

O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

The Concluding Rites

WE ARE SENT In the Concluding Rites, we are sent out as one, receiving God's blessing to be his presence in the world in which we live.

Why is 'Mass' called 'Mass'?

It comes from the Latin words of the dismissal at the very end of Mass – Ite, missa est. We are sent out in peace to love and serve the Lord, as we have all got a mission to announce the Gospel of the Lord and glorify him in our lives. This means that our 'Amen' to the Lord in Holy Communion is to be an 'Amen' to him in all people and in the world in which we live, seeing him in others and serving him in others, so that what we celebrate at the Altar becomes a reality in our daily lives until we can gather again to celebrate the Eucharist, our great thanksgiving to almighty God.

'Human beings all over the world today need nourishment. And this nourishment is not just to satisfy physical hunger. There are other hungers – for love, for immortality of life, for affection, for being cared for, for forgiveness, for mercy. This hunger can be satiated only by the bread that comes from above. Jesus himself is the living bread that gives life to the world. His body offered for our sake on the cross, his blood shed for the pardon of the sins of humanity is made available to us in the bread and wine of the Eucharist transformed in the consecration.

'But the Eucharist does not end with the partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord. It leads us to solidarity with others. The communion with the Lord is necessarily a communion with our fellow brothers and sisters. And therefore, the one who is fed and nourished by the very body and blood of Christ cannot remain unaffected when he sees his brothers and sisters suffering want and hunger. Those nourished by the Eucharist are called to bring the joy of the gospel to those who have not received it. Strengthened by the living Bread we are called to bring hope to those who live in darkness and in despair.'