

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

— Jn 6:6

When you take the time to prepare for Mass, your attitude begins to change. The Mass becomes much more than something that you do every weekend. Your mind discovers a deeper appreciation of the mystery that you experience during the liturgy, your heart becomes more open to God’s love, and your soul becomes more receptive to the graces that God is bestowing upon you.

Preparation leads to Participation

Here are some ways that you can participate more fully in the Mass:

- Research the Mass: its history, its substance, and its meaning (see For Further Reading for some good resources to get you started).
- Think about what you are saying as you recite the prayers of the Mass.
- Be enthusiastic as you speak the words of the responses.
- Sing with your whole heart and soul.
- Pay close attention to the homily.
- Offer to bring the gifts up to the altar.
- Allow yourself to feel a sense of awe during the Consecration.
- Realize that you are receiving the Real Presence of Jesus during Communion.
- Spend a few moments before you leave church in silent meditation and prayer, thinking about what you experienced. Did you experience God’s presence?



Digital Vision



DesignPics

What is the Mass?

The Mass is the summit of our spiritual life. It unites us as a community of believers who gather to remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

At the beginning of the Mass, we acknowledge our failures and ask for God’s mercy. Then we join together in offering praise to God.

In the readings and the homily, the Lord reveals himself to us. We see how God has interacted with human beings throughout history. We see how the Holy Spirit inspires and guides us in our own lives.

In gratitude for all that our gracious and loving God has done for us, we offer ourselves to God. We offer our strengths and weaknesses, our joys, our sorrows. We unite our offering with the one sacrifice that Jesus made when he died on the Cross.

We watch in wonder as bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus. It is through this sacrifice that Jesus bestows upon us the grace of salvation. We pray together in the words that Jesus taught us, the Our Father. Then, we share a spiritual meal in communion with one another. We experience the Real Presence of Jesus. We give thanks for all of the good things that the Lord has done for us.

At the end of the Mass, we are sent into the world to love and serve the Lord and one another.

For Further Reading

Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians, 2nd Edition* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

Michael Dubruiel, *A Pocket Guide to the Mass* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

———. *How to Get the Most Out of the Mass* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2005).

———. *The How-to Book of the Mass: Everything You Need to Know but No One Ever Taught You* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

My Daily Visitor (Our Sunday Visitor).

Magnificat magazine (for subscription information: www.magnificat.com).

The Word Among Us magazine (<http://wau.org/>).

The New Saint Joseph Sunday Missal, Complete Edition (Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 2010).

Web site

Weekly Mass Readings can also be found at www.usccb.org/nab.

To view a PDF of additional topical pamphlets or to order bulk copies of this pamphlet, go to www.osv.com/pamphlets

Our Sunday Visitor

Bringing Your Catholic Faith to Life

1-800-348-2440 • Fax: 1-800-498-6709 • www.osv.com

By Fr. Ralph W. Talbot, Jr., with Lorene Hanley Duquin

Copyright © Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

No part of this pamphlet can be reprinted or reproduced in any form.

Inventory No. P1055

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Michael Heintz, Ph.D., *Censor Librorum*

Imprimatur: † John M. D’Arcy

Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

November 11, 2009

The Scripture citations used in this work are taken from the *Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV)*, copyright © 1965 and 1966 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

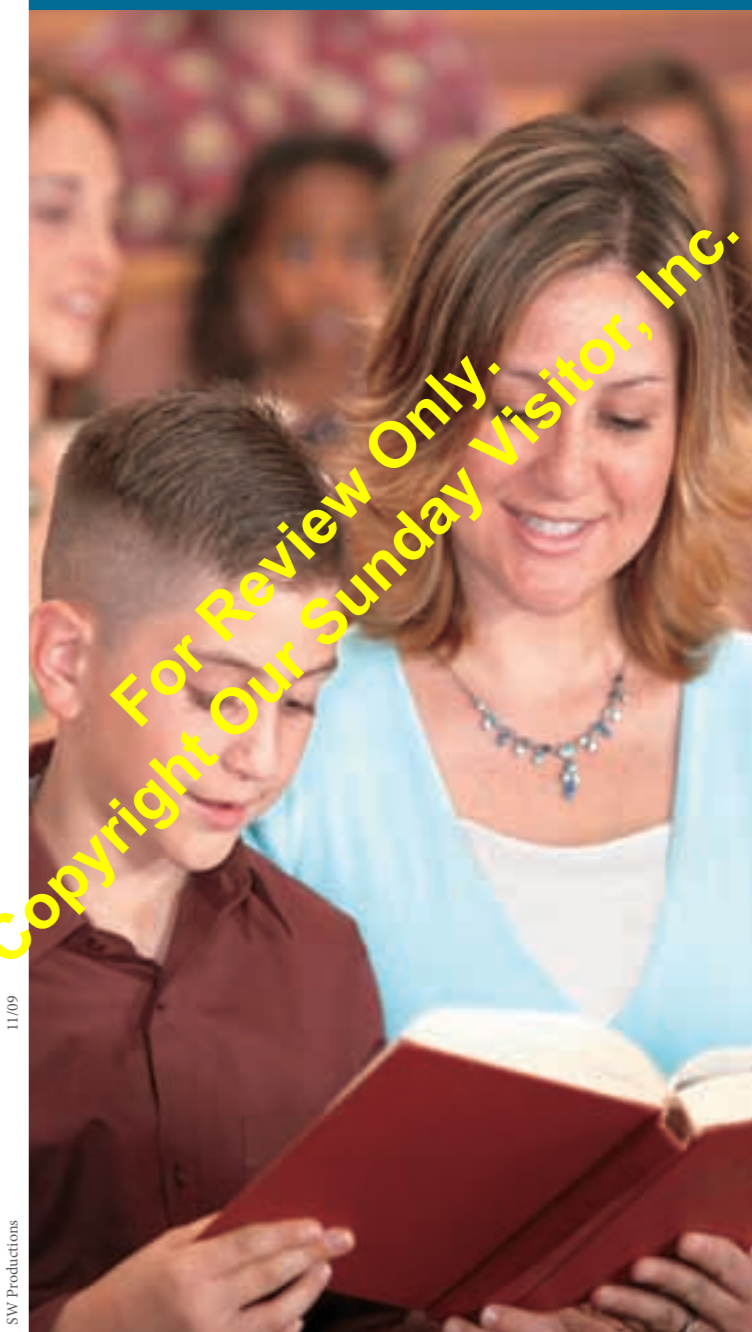
English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church for the United States of America* copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* copyright © 1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

US \$14.95



9 781592 767342

FIVE WAYS to Prepare for Mass



For Review Only. Copyright Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

11/09

SW Productions

Taking the Time to Prepare

Most events in life require preparation. When you go on a trip, you get to the airport early so you can get through security. When you go to a concert or sporting event, you arrive early to find your seat. When you host a party, you make sure you have all the right food and supplies.

Preparation is important for a successful day at work, at school, or even at the gym. Getting in the right mindset, anticipating what might happen, and setting goals for what you want to achieve is a recipe for success. It helps you feel a sense of security, readiness, and satisfaction.

The same holds true for Mass.



Jupiter Images

Preparing for Mass

For some people in the parish, taking time to prepare for Mass is absolutely essential. Your parish priest prepares a homily. Lectors spend time reviewing the readings. Music directors select hymns that tie into the readings. The choir practices. The sacristan readies the vestments, the hosts, and the wine. Liturgy committee members make sure altar linens are pressed, banners are hung, and flowers are arranged. Staff members make sure bulletins are ready for distribution. Someone cleans the church.

Most Catholics would agree that these kinds of preparations are important for a prayerful liturgy. But what most Catholics don't realize is that it is also important for the people in the pews to prepare for Mass.

Here are five simple things you can do to prepare for Mass. They aren't difficult or time-consuming. But they are guaranteed to help you enter more deeply into the celebration of the Mass and achieve a more intimate union with Christ and the other members of the worshipping community.

1. Know why you are there.

The Mass is a liturgy; the word *liturgy* comes from a Greek word meaning "the work of the people." You come to Mass not as a spectator but as a participant. You join with other members of the parish community in prayer, worship, thanksgiving, and communion. You are no longer just an individual. You are an important part of the Body of Christ

Take a few minutes each week to think about your place in the Body of Christ. It will give you a deeper appreciation of who you are. It will help you recognize the unique gifts and talents that you were given. It will give you a deeper appreciation of the other people in your parish community.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

— 1 Cor 12:12

2. Reflect on the readings.

Set aside a few minutes on a specific day each week to read the First Reading, the Psalm, the Second Reading, and the Gospel for the following weekend. Let the words penetrate your mind and your soul. How do these readings apply to your life? What is the Lord saying to you in these readings? Is there something that you are being asked to do? Is the Lord leading you in a new direction?

Finding the weekly readings is easy. You can purchase a Sunday Missal, subscribe to a magazine like *My Daily Visitor*, *Magnificat*, or *The Word Among Us*. You



Jupiter Images

can also check out readings in many online sources, among them www.usccb.org.

As you become accustomed to reviewing the readings ahead of time, you will begin to look forward to going to Mass. During the Mass you will have a deeper awareness of how the introductory prayers tie into the theme of the readings. When you hear the readings proclaimed and listen as the priest gives the homily, the insights you receive will be more profound, and you will have a heightened spiritual awareness.

3. Think about your offering.

When you come to Mass, you bring everything that you are to the altar as an offering to the Lord. It's a good idea to spend a little time throughout the week thinking about what you will offer to the Lord.

What joys will you share? What sorrows would you like to unburden? How have you used the gifts that you have been given? What anxieties or tensions are troubling you? Do you want to offer up any pain or suffering you have experienced? Do you have questions or doubts that you want to give to God?

Think also about the state of your soul. Are you ready to give yourself to God entirely? Are you holding anything back, carrying any anger or resentments? Do you need to forgive someone or seek the forgiveness of someone you hurt? Do you need to seek the Lord's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

It's also a good idea to think about what you want to ask God. Is there something or someone that you want to pray for? Do you need guidance in some area of your life? For what are you grateful?

In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368



Design Pics

4. See yourself as part of the community.

Your experience of the Mass begins the moment you arrive at church. Plan to get there a little early.

Outside of the church, smile and speak to the other people who are arriving, keeping in mind that everyone in the parish community is part of the Body of Christ. You might take a moment in the parking lot or vestibule to introduce yourself to someone you don't know. A friendly hello makes everyone feel wanted and welcome.

As you enter the church, bless yourself with holy water. Making the Sign of the Cross with holy water is a reminder of your baptism, which made you a part of the Body of Christ. It is through your baptism that you can participate in the fullness of the Eucharistic celebration.

You might try sitting in a different pew every once in a while. It will give you a new view of the altar and a chance to interact with different people. Be sure to genuflect or bow before entering your pew. We do this as an act of reverence and an acknowledgement of God's presence.

5. Enter into God's presence.

Spend some time in silence before Mass begins. Quiet your mind. Let go of any tensions or anxieties that you brought with you.

Think about how you purposely avoided food for an hour before Mass. One reason for this fast was to create in you a feeling of hunger for the Eucharist. Allow your soul to yearn for the Lord. Ask God to fill all of the empty places inside you.

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you in the readings, the music, the homily, the prayers of the Mass, and your Communion meditation. Everything that you

think and do in these final moments before Mass instills in you a joyful anticipation for your encounter with the Lord.



Digital Vision