

Do Catholics re-crucify Christ at every Mass?

No, we do not. Jesus died only once. During the Mass, we remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on Calvary, and we unite ourselves to the sacrifice that Christ made by offering to God all that we are and all that we do.

Why is it called the Mass?

The word “Mass” comes from the Latin word *missa*, which means “to send.” The Mass prepares us spiritually to live as authentic followers of Jesus Christ in our everyday lives.

Why do some people call the Mass “liturgy”?

A liturgy is any public ritual that the Church celebrates. In the past, the Mass was called the “Divine Liturgy.” The word “liturgy” actually comes from a Greek word meaning “the work of the people.” When you attend Mass, you are a participant, not a spectator. You join with the priest and the people around you in prayer, reflection, thanksgiving, and communion.

Why can't someone “just pray at home”?

It's good to pray at home, yet private prayer doesn't take the place of attending Mass. When you pray at home, your prayer is personal and one-dimensional. When you are at Mass, you pray in union with other believers as part of a community. The Mass gives you the opportunity to seek forgiveness for your sins, be inspired by the readings and the homily, offer yourself to the Lord, reach out to others with the peace of Christ, forgive others during the Lord's Prayer, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and become empowered to carry the presence of Christ into the world.



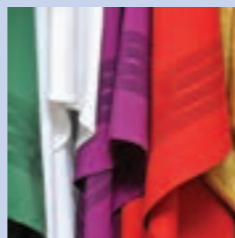
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Why do some people genuflect or bow before entering a pew?

When we genuflect (lowering ourselves until one knee touches the floor) or bow (bending reverently at the waist), we recognize with our whole being that we are in the presence of God; indeed, we are in the real presence of Christ in the tabernacle. Why some people genuflect and others bow may have to do with physical limitations.

What is the significance of the different colors the priest wears?

The colors reflect the different times of the liturgical year. Advent and Lent are purple. Christmas and Easter are white. Pentecost, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and the feast days of apostles and martyrs are red. Green is used for ordinary time.



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Is Mass supposed to be entertaining?

The Mass was never intended as entertainment. It is a ritual, which means that through the repetition of prayers, movements, and the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, we are spiritually formed, inspired, and consoled.

The Mass does not try to induce a particular feeling in participants. It allows each person to bring his or her own feelings and incorporate them into the liturgy. That's why it is possible for two people to attend Mass, one grieving a death and the other celebrating a birth, yet both feel connected. The whole point during Mass is to offer yourself and all that you may be feeling to God in Jesus Christ.

Why do we have to attend Mass every weekend?

The moral obligation to attend Mass has been Church law since the fourth century. But rather than think of it as something we “have to do,” we should think of Mass as valuable time spent with our loving God and with others. When we go to Mass, we begin to see that we are not alone and recognize that we are part of the Body of Christ, and if one part of the body is missing, the whole body suffers.

Additional Resources:

Books

Faith Charts: The Mass at a Glance, Mike Aquilina (Our Sunday Visitor, 2010).

How-to Book of the Mass, Michael Dubruiel (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

The Mass Book for Children, Rosemarie Gortler and Donna Piscitelli (Our Sunday Visitor, 2004).

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

Website

Catechism of the Catholic Church (about the Mass and Eucharist): www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm

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Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT

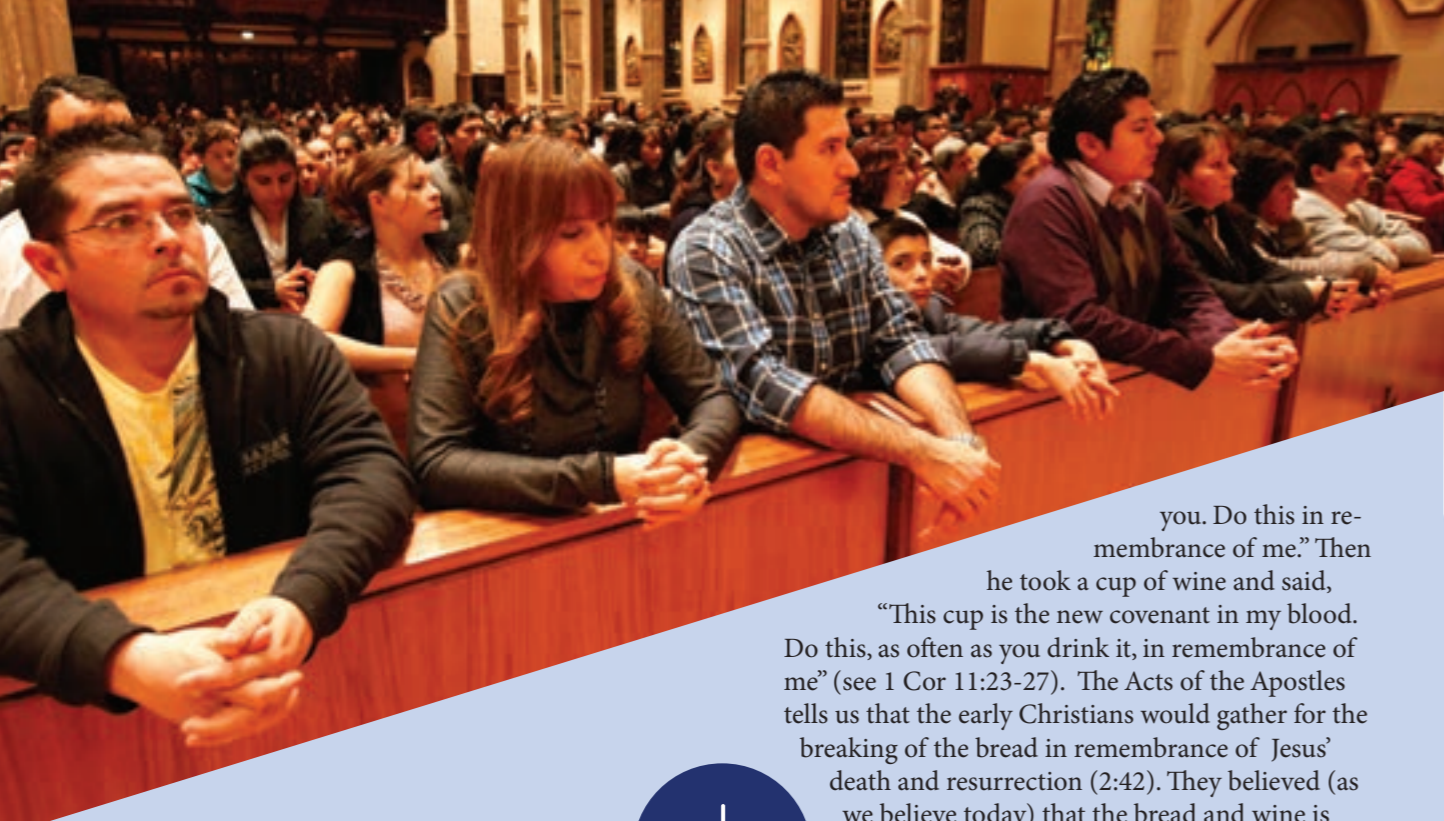
THE

MASS



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KAREN CALLAWAY

you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took a cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” (see 1 Cor 11:23-27). The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the early Christians would gather for the breaking of the bread in remembrance of Jesus’ death and resurrection (2:42). They believed (as we believe today) that the bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

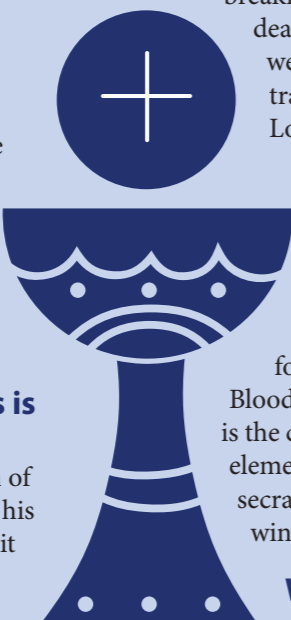
Sometimes we get so accustomed to doing something — like going to Mass — that we never get around to asking the questions we have about it. Chances are you have a few unanswered questions about the Mass, or you may know someone who has questions. Here’s a closer look at some of the things many people ask about the Mass.

How would I explain what the Mass is to non-Catholic friends?

You can tell them the Mass is our central form of worship because it unites us to Jesus Christ in his saving death and by the grace of the Holy Spirit draws all of us into deeper communion with him and with one another.

Why do we have a Mass?

We celebrate the Mass because Jesus asked us to do this when he instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. St. Paul tells us that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and said, “This is my body that is for



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How does the bread and wine change into the Body and Blood of Christ?

During the Eucharistic prayer, the priest asks God to send the Holy Spirit and transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is called transubstantiation. It is the conversion of the *substance* of the Eucharistic elements into the Body and Blood of Christ at consecration, with only the *appearances* of bread and wine still remaining.

What does the word “Eucharist” mean?

The word “Eucharist” is from a Greek word that means “thanksgiving.” For us, it is another term used in conjunction with the Mass and holy Communion. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we give thanks to God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

What do I need to know about the Mass?

It’s important to know that there are different parts to the Mass.

- **The introductory part** of the Mass includes the procession, the greeting, the penitential rites, the Gloria (except during Advent and Lent), and the opening prayer.
- The next part of the Mass is the **Liturgy of the Word**. It includes the readings, responsorial psalm, Gospel, homily, Creed, and Prayer of the Faithful.
- The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** begins when the gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar. During the Eucharistic prayer, we witness the miracle of bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ. We proclaim the mystery of our faith and join ourselves in union with Christ’s singular sac-



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rifice to the Father. Then, we respond with the great Amen, recite the Lord’s Prayer, share a sign of Christ’s peace with each other, ask the Lamb of God to have mercy on us, and humbly approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. (If you are unable to receive the sacrament, you may make a spiritual communion, receiving Jesus into your heart.)

- After the distribution of holy Communion, we have a chance to meditate before the **dismissal rites**, which include the closing prayer, a blessing, the commission to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord, and the final hymn.

What do I need to know about the readings?

The first reading is always taken from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season when we read from the Acts of the Apostles). The first reading always relates to the Gospel reading for that day. The second reading is always taken from one of the letters in the New Testament or from the Book of Revelation. The second reading does not correspond to the Gospel passage but, instead, is a continuation from the previous week’s passage. The Gospel passage is the most important reading because it is Jesus speaking to us through his words and his actions. We sit during the first two readings, but we stand for the Gospel in acknowledgement that we are hearing the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ.



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What is the significance of the responsorial psalm?

The psalms were originally written as Jewish songs of prayer, praise, and petition. The early Christians sang psalms when they broke bread and shared the cup in remembrance of Jesus. We have continued that tradition over the centuries. Today, the responsorial psalm relates to the theme of the first reading and the Gospel.

Why do we stand up after the homily for the Nicene Creed?

We stand up to proclaim publicly what we believe. We profess that we believe in God, in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church, in the Communion of Saints, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life after death. The Creed is first and foremost a prayer, not merely an oath of membership, which professes the creative and saving love of God and how this has been revealed, experienced, and known in history. This is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our faith.