

Practical Ways to Prepare for Mass



The Second Vatican Council described the Mass – the Eucharistic sacrifice – as “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium* 11). “For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324).

By participating in Mass, we follow Jesus’ command to “do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19) “At the last supper... our Lord instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, ‘a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.’” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47)

At Mass, Jesus offers you the gift of himself. What do you offer him? Your time? Your attention? The following are practical suggestions to help you prepare for Sunday Mass and better receive Christ’s tremendous gift of himself.

- ✠ **Read the Sunday Mass readings ahead of time.** We publish the scripture references for the following Sunday’s Mass readings in the weekly bulletin so that you can look them up in your Bible at home. The Mass readings may also be found on-line at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop’s website: usccb.org. Familiarizing yourself (and your children) with the readings helps you to better understand what God is communicating to you at Mass.
- ✠ **Examine your conscience.** St. Paul cautions that “whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup.” (I Corinthians 11:27-28) Therefore the Church teaches that “anyone conscience of a grave (mortal) sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before going to communion” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1385). We need to be right with the Lord in order to properly receive his body and blood. Confessions at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel are on Saturdays at 4:00 pm.
- ✠ **Fast.** Don’t eat or drink anything, including chewing gum, (except water) for one hour before receiving communion (unless sick, aged, or a caregiver). Holy Communion is unlike anything else you consume. Fasting before you receive Communion reminds you of the sacredness of receiving Jesus’ body and blood.

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- † **Dress appropriately.** Dressing up reminds us of the importance of the occasion. If we really believe that Mass is our opportunity to encounter Christ in word and sacrament, we will dress accordingly.
- † **Pray on the way to church.** Getting to Mass can be hectic (especially if you have kids). Ask God's help to arrive at Mass with a good attitude and correct disposition.
- † **Leave cell phones and other electronics at home or in the car.** Take this time to exclusively focus on the Lord.
- † **Arrive early.** Our lives are busy and full of distractions. Arriving early gives us some time to focus our attention on the Lord. Besides, if something is important to us, we don't want to miss a moment of it.
- † **Sit near the front.** Symbols and gestures are integral to the Mass and are more easily seen near the front. (Sitting near the front can help children to better pay attention.)
- † **Pray before Mass begins.** Bring a Bible or a prayer book. Or use the prayers found on pages 231-233 in the missalette. Think of a special intention to pray for during Mass – someone or something that needs your prayers in a special way.
- † **Fully participate with all the songs, responses and prayers.** Say it and sing it like you mean it. When you say "amen" be in complete agreement with what was said and willing to 'stake your life on it.'
- † **Keep a Spiritual Journal.** Bring a small notebook to Mass. As the readings are read and the homily is proclaimed, record any thoughts that God may be communicating to you.
- † **Offer yourself with the gifts on the altar.** Traditionally, the drop of water that the priest pours into the wine of the chalice symbolizes us, the faithful. Just as the water can no longer be separated from the wine, so we are to be completely immersed in Christ.
- † **Stay particularly focused at the Consecration.** When the priest says the words of Jesus over the bread and wine, "this is my body ... this is my blood" and elevates the host and the chalice, silently pray a prayer recognizing this real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, such as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28) or "praise to you Lord Jesus Christ."
- † **Say a prayer of thanksgiving after receiving Communion.** The "Anima Christi" prayer found on the inside front cover of the missalette is very appropriate to pray after receiving Communion, or you can make up your own prayer of thanksgiving.
- † **Don't leave early.** Remember, Judas Iscariot was the first person to leave Mass early, when he left the Last Supper in order to betray Jesus.
- † **Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to a fellow parishioner.** We all hope to spend eternity with God in heaven. We might as well get to know each other while we are still here on earth.

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