

Roman Missal

Third Edition

Weekly Bulletin Inserts

St. Benedict Parish

Marguerite, Pa.

2011

Based upon Roman Missal Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "2010

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1. Celebrating the Lord's Day

On Sunday, we gather as the Body of Christ to celebrate the Lord's Day, the day of Christ's Resurrection:

As "the first day of the week" (Mk 16:2) it recalls the first creation; and as the "eighth day," which follows the sabbath, it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by the Resurrection of Christ. Thus, it has become for Christians the first of all days and of all feasts. It is the day of the Lord in which he with his Passover fulfilled the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and proclaimed man's eternal rest in God. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 452)

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus rose on the first day of the week - the day following the Jewish Sabbath. Shortly after daybreak, the women found the tomb empty and Jesus risen from the dead. Jesus' death and Resurrection opened for us the doors of salvation. Sharing in Jesus' death in Baptism, we hope to share in his Resurrection. We become a new creation in Christ. It is that new creation which we celebrate on Sunday:

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad. (Ps 118:24)

Each Sunday is a "little Easter" - a celebration of the central mysteries of our faith.

THE SUNDAY EUCHARIST

The primary way in which we celebrate the Lord's Day is with our participation in the Sunday Eucharist. What better way to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord than by celebration of the memorial of his Passion, death, and Resurrection? This celebration is not a solitary, private event. Instead, we come together as the People of God, the Church, to worship with one heart and one voice. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches that "participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church" (CCC, no. 2182). When members of our church community are absent from this gathering, they are missed. No member of the faithful should be absent from the Sunday Eucharist without a serious reason. The Liturgy should be the first thing on Sunday's schedule, not the last. We should arrive on time, prepared in mind and heart to fully participate in the Mass. Those who cannot attend because of illness or the need to care for infants or the sick deserve our prayers and special attention. Often, people will suggest that going to Sunday Mass is not necessary. After all, they can pray at home just as well. This has clearly been an issue in the Church for more than a millennium. In the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom addressed this problem directly:

You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests. (CCC, no. 2179, quoting St. John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili* 3, 6: PG 48, 725)

Private prayer, though essential to the spiritual life, can never replace the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy and the reception of Holy Communion. In some communities, the lack of priests makes it impossible to celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday. In such instances, the bishop may make provision for these parish communities to gather and celebrate the Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Hours. These Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest may or may not include the reception of Holy Communion. Still, these celebrations allow the People of God to gather and keep holy the Lord's Day.

KEEPING SUNDAY - ALL DAY

Celebrating the Sunday Eucharist—though central and essential—does not complete our observance of Sunday. In addition to attending Mass each Sunday, we should also refrain “from those activities which impede the worship of God and disturb the joy proper to the day of the Lord or the necessary relaxation of mind and body” (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 453). Sunday has traditionally been a day of rest. However, the concept of a day of rest may seem odd in a world that runs 24/7, where we are tethered to our jobs by a variety of electronic gadgets, where businesses run as normal no matter what the day of the week, and where silence seems to be an endangered species. By taking a day each week to rest in the Lord, we provide a living example to the culture that all time belongs to God and that people are more important than things. As Pope John Paul II said in *Dies Domini* (The Day of the Lord), his apostolic letter on Sunday:

Through Sunday rest, daily concerns and tasks can find their proper perspective: the material things about which we worry give way to spiritual values; in a moment of encounter and less pressured exchange, we see the true face of the people with whom we live. Even the beauties of nature - too often marred by the desire to exploit, which turns against man himself - can be rediscovered and enjoyed to the full. (*Dies Domini*, no. 67)

Not everyone has the freedom to take Sundays away from work. Some people, including medical professionals and public safety workers, must work on Sundays to keep the rest of us safe and healthy. Others must work for economic reasons beyond their control. Resting on Sunday does not mean that we are inactive. Instead,

Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm, and the elderly. Christians will also sanctify Sunday by devoting time and care to their families and relatives, often difficult to do on other days of the week. Sunday is a time

for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life. (CCC, no. 2186)

To celebrate the Lord's Day more fully, consider trying the following:

- Don't use Sunday as your catch-all day for errands and household chores.
- Share a family dinner after Mass. Have the whole family join in the preparation and cleanup.
- Go for a walk or bike ride and give thanks to God for the beauty of nature.
- Spend time reading the Bible or a spiritual book.
- Pray the Rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours, alone or with others.
- Volunteer in a local food pantry.
- Visit parishioners and others who are homebound.
- Read Bible stories to your children.
- Turn off your gadgets and enjoy the silence.

As we take time each week to celebrate the Paschal Mystery in the Eucharist and to rest from the burdens of our daily lives, we remind ourselves that we are made in the image and likeness of God who “rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken” (Gn 2:2).

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2. Embracing Change in the Liturgy

For many people, change does not come easy. Change requires us to stop doing things a certain way in order to do something else. Many people find comfort in familiar routines and known ways of acting. Change interrupts those familiar routines. But change is also an opportunity to stop and reflect on what we are doing and to come to a better understanding of God, who does not change.

WHY DOES THE CHURCH CHANGE THE LITURGY?

In its Liturgy, the Church always attempts to follow the “norm of the holy Fathers.” This effort “requires not only the preservation of what our immediate forebears have handed on to us, but also an understanding and a more profound pondering of the Church’s entire past. . . . this broader view allows us to see how the Holy Spirit endows the People of God with a marvelous fidelity in preserving the unalterable deposit of faith, even though there is a very great variety of prayers and rites” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 9).

The Liturgy must, therefore, always celebrate and make present the Paschal Sacrifice of Christ - his saving Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension. However, over time, it may become necessary to make certain changes, such as adding prayers for recently canonized saints and adding texts that reflect the needs that the People of God wish to bring to God in prayer. The third edition of the Roman Missal makes such additions and provides a fresh translation of the Latin texts of the existing content of the Missal.

WHO DECIDES THAT THE LITURGY SHOULD CHANGE?

Pope John Paul II approved the promulgation of the third edition of the Missale Romanum, the Latin text, on April 20, 2000. The final Latin edition of the revised text was published in March 2002. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments was responsible for preparing the text. The Congregation is the Vatican office that the pope has charged with overseeing all matters related to the Liturgy and the sacraments. Any changes in the words of the sacramental formulas - the essential words in the celebration of each of the sacraments (either in Latin or in vernacular translations) - must be approved by the Holy Father personally. In addition, church law also gives to conferences of bishops (such as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) as well as individual bishops certain responsibilities with regard to the Liturgy. What exactly is changing? The structure of the Mass (the order of the elements, the actions of the priest celebrant, and so forth) remains unchanged in the new edition of the Roman Missal. However, the translation of the prayer texts will change to more closely reflect the original Latin texts. In some cases, new options for prayers may be available, and some old options may no longer be present.

WILL THE CHANGES BE NOTICEABLE?

In the third edition of the Roman Missal, almost every prayer in the Mass - those spoken by the priest and those spoken by the people - has been retranslated from the Latin to English. Some prayers now recited by memory will need to be relearned, and the familiar language of many prayers recited by the priest will change.

In preparing the new translation, the translators were asked to make the English texts conform more closely to the Latin originals and to retain traditional theological vocabulary that communicates important concepts of the faith.

The language that the faithful will hear and pray is more formal and somewhat more complex than the language of ordinary conversation. It conveys rich theological concepts and retains biblical language and images.

How can I prepare for the change? There are many ways in which you can prepare for the changes in the Mass:

- Make a conscious effort to participate more fully in the Mass each Sunday and holy day.
- Take advantage of any special catechetical sessions offered by your parish or diocese.
- Visit the Roman Missal Web site (www.usccb.org/romanmissal) to study the new texts and to learn more about the changes.
- Read the new texts of the people's parts at Mass. Begin to study them so that you will be able to pray them well when the new Roman Missal is implemented.
- Pray for a renewal of love for the Liturgy in your parish and in the Church.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THESE CHANGES MAKE IN MY PARISH?

Some of the differences will be obvious immediately. We will have to learn new musical settings for the various parts of the Mass. We will learn new words for common prayers, such as the Creed. Those of us who began saying the Mass prayers by heart long ago will need to rely on printed texts again, at least for a while. In the early months of the transition, we may find it more challenging to pray with one voice as people adjust to the new texts and gradually commit them to their hearts.

But these surface differences will give way to deeper and more significant changes. If we use the time of preparation well, we will make the changes with a deeper understanding of the Liturgy and a renewed reverence for and appreciation of the Mass. We will hear the prayers with new ears and with new hearts. Our Liturgy will be filled with new life and new spirit as we celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ made present for us.

WHERE CAN I TURN FOR HELP IN UNDERSTANDING THESE CHANGES?

The first stop for catechesis and formation regarding these changes is your parish and diocese. All the faithful are encouraged to take advantage of parish efforts. You can attend catechetical sessions, read articles in the parish bulletin or newsletter or the diocesan newspaper, listen closely to homilies that help explain the changes, and come early to Mass to practice new musical settings for the prayers.

In addition, many dioceses, schools, universities, and retreat centers will offer programs to help people understand and appreciate the new translation. You can take advantage of these programs where possible. The official Web site for the third edition of the Roman Missal is found at www.usccb.org/romanmissal. A variety of resources will be posted that may help you. Catholic publishers and national organizations will publish many resources, in print and online, to help you negotiate this time of change. Check out your parish book rack or your local Catholic bookstore to see what is available.

WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE THE NEW TRANSLATION?

For most people, the unfamiliar is always uncomfortable, at least at first. The more familiar the old is, the more challenging it may be to accept and embrace the new. It is completely normal to feel uncomfortable as you begin studying and reading the new texts. Taking steps to become more familiar with the texts can help a great deal. At the same time, be open to the possibility that you will find things to appreciate in the rich language of the new texts. The more you read them and study them and pray them, the more familiar and comfortable they will become and the more you will appreciate the theological depth they convey.

Taking the time to learn more about your faith, including the Mass and Scripture, can help you appreciate the new texts more fully.

Using the catechetical opportunities made available by your parish and diocese can help you overcome concerns about the changes.

Finally, you can take your concerns to God in prayer. Pray for a deeper understanding of the meaning of these texts and for an open heart to grow in communion with the Church.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE THE PROCESS OF CHANGE A GOOD ONE FOR MY PARISH?

Everyone has a role to play in preparing to use the new translations:

- Study the new texts with an open heart and an open mind so that you will be ready to use them in the Liturgy.
- Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about the new texts by attending catechetical programs and reading articles about the new texts.
- Offer to assist your pastor or parish director of religious education in preparing parish catechetical events.
- If you are a parent, teach your children the new prayers and help them to understand the changes. Encourage them to participate in the Mass fully and to learn more about their faith.
- Be very intentional about celebrating the Liturgy each Sunday and holy day.
- Arrive on time (or a bit early).
- Pray and sing with attentiveness.
- Stay focused on the action of the Liturgy rather than letting your mind wander.
- Hold the Sacrament of the Eucharist in great reverence.
- Finally, give thanks to God in your heart for so great a gift.

Times of change are always a challenge. But from this challenge can come a deeper appreciation of who we are as the Body of Christ, gathering to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of the Lord.

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3. The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer or Canon of the Mass is the central prayer of the entire celebration. Most Catholics have been made aware from their earliest days that during the Eucharistic Prayer the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. What many Catholics are not aware of, however, is that the Eucharistic Prayer is about more than adoring Christ who becomes present in our midst.

The Church tells us that liturgy (and the Mass is the highpoint and heart of liturgy) is the action of Christ the priest and His Body, the Church. In the celebration of Mass, during the Eucharistic Prayer, not only does Christ become present, body and blood, soul and divinity, under the forms of bread and wine, but Christ's saving action, His passion, death and resurrection are once again enacted and offered to the Father by Christ Himself in the person of the priest, and by all present.

This is a truth of enormous significance! This action of Christ which brought about our redemption from sin and eternal death, offered once for all on Calvary, becomes present again for us, here and now, in this time and place, so that we can join in Christ's perfect offering and can ourselves participate in His perfect worship.

Read carefully any of the Eucharistic Prayers. You will see that that prayer is offered, not to Christ, but to the Father: Father, you are holy indeed ...; Father, we bring you these gifts ...; Father, we ask you It is worship offered to the Father by Christ as it was at the moment of His passion, death and resurrection, but now it is offered through the priest acting in the person of Christ, and it is offered as well by all of us who are part of Christ's Body, the Church. This is the action of Christ's Body, the Church at Mass.

When the priest prays this prayer he prays we bring you these gifts; we ask you ...; we offer. That we signifies that all the baptized present at this Eucharistic celebration make this offering in union with Christ, pray this prayer in union with Him. And what is most important, we do not offer Christ alone; we are called to offer ourselves, our lives, our individual efforts to grow more like Christ and our efforts as a community of believers to spread God's Word and to serve God's people, to the Father in union with Christ through the hands of the priest. Most wonderful of all, although our offering is in itself imperfect, joined with the offering of Christ it becomes perfect praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

And so, during the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, we have more to do than to look forward to the moment of consecration and remain there while the prayer of the priest continues. Before the consecration we join in the prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Father known as the Preface and affirm that praise and thanksgiving in our singing of the Holy, Holy, Holy. Following the Consecration we join together in the Memorial Acclamation which proclaims our common faith

in Christ's real presence and is an acclamation expressing our gratitude to Christ for His wonderful gift of salvation. But then our prayer moves on and we are called to offer Christ, and ourselves with Christ to the Father: 'We offer to you, Father, this holy and living sacrifice...' and to pray with the priest that 'we who are nourished by His Body and Blood may be filled with the Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit in Christ...'; we then join our prayers with the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints for our Holy Father the Pope, our bishops and clergy and all God's people, living and dead. At the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer the priest sums up all that has gone before: ' Through Him (Christ), with Him (Christ), in Him (Christ) in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever.' And we who are privileged to make our own offering through, with and in Christ, respond with the most important acclamation of the Mass, the great AMEN by which we profess the action of Christ to be our action as well.

Based upon Roman Missal Formational Materials, provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Eucharistic Prayer or Canon of the Mass is the Catholic Bishops, "2010.

4. Unfamiliar Words in the Mass

Some of the words used in the new translation of the Mass may be unfamiliar to some Catholics.

The following list of definitions may help to increase your understanding of the rich theology that underlies these texts.

- **Abasement** - The lowering of one of higher rank. Jesus abased himself in that, though he was God, he lowered himself and became a human being so that he might save us from our sins (see Phil 2:6-11).
- **Adoption** - In Baptism, the Holy Spirit transforms us into children of the Father, thereby making us his adopted sons and daughters in the likeness of his eternal Son (see Eph 1:3-6). In this way, the faithful are made 'partakers in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pt 1:4) by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior' (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 1129). In the sacraments, we become the sons and daughters of God by adoption through Christ Jesus.
- **Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominions** - Spiritual, personal, and immortal creatures, with intelligence and free will, who glorify God and serve him as messengers of his saving plan. Traditionally, the choirs of angels have been divided into various ranks, including archangels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (see Col 1:16).
- **Chalice** - From the Latin word 'calix' meaning 'cup' (see Ps 116:13; Mt 20:22; 1 Cor 10:16). The use of this term in the Liturgy points to the chalice's function as a particular kind of cup and indicates the uniqueness of what it contains, the very Blood of Christ.
- **Clemency** - The loving kindness, compassion, or mercy that God shows to sinners.
- **Communion** - Our fellowship and union with Jesus and other baptized Christians in the Church, which has its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. By receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, we are united to him and one another as members of his Body.
- **Consecration** - The dedication of a thing or person to divine service by a prayer or blessing. In the Mass, 'consecration' also refers to the words spoken by the priest whereby the bread and wine are transformed into the risen Body and Blood of Jesus.
- **Consubstantial** - The belief, articulated in the Nicene Creed, about the relationship of the Father and the Son that 'in the Father and with the Father, the Son is one and the same God' (CCC, no. 262).
- **Contrite** - To be repentant within one's heart and mind for sins committed and to resolve not to sin again.

- **Covenant** - A solemn agreement between human beings, between God and a human being, or between God and a people involving mutual commitments or promises. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with the Jewish people. Jesus, through his death and Resurrection, made a new covenant with the whole of humanity. One enters into this new covenant through faith and Baptism.
- **Damnation** - Eternal separation from God's love caused by dying in mortal sin without repentance.
- **Godhead** - The mystery of one God in three Persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Homage** - The honor, respect, and reverence due to another. Homage is especially due to God, for he is eternal, all good, all holy, and all loving.
- **Implore** - To plead, beseech, or ask with humility. This is an example of the self-deprecatory language in the Roman Missal that helps to express our dependence on God. We humbly beg the Father to hear and answer our prayers, for we ask them in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus.
- **Incarnation** - The Son of God assumed human nature and became man by being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is true God and true man. As man, the Son of God obtained our salvation. The use of this term in the Nicene Creed indicates that Jesus' birth has a significance beyond that of any other human birth.
- **Ineffable** - That which cannot be conceived or expressed fully (see 1 Cor 2:6-9). One cannot, for example, adequately describe in concepts and words the mystery of the Trinity or the mystery of the Incarnation.
- **Infusion** - The Holy Spirit is poured into the hearts and souls of believers, and so they are filled, or infused, with grace.
- **Intercessor** - One who makes a petition on behalf of others. Our unique intercessor is Jesus Christ, who intercedes on our behalf with the Father (see Rom 8:34). The priest at Mass acting in the person of Christ intercedes on behalf of the whole Church.
- **Justification** - The gracious action by which God frees us from sin and makes us holy and righteous before him.
- **Lord, God of Hosts** - From the word 'sabaoth,' hosts are the invisible powers that work at God's command over heaven and earth.
- **Mediator** - One who unites or reconciles separate or opposing parties. Thus, Jesus Christ is the 'one mediator between God and the human race' (1 Tm 2:5). Through his sacrificial offering he has become high priest and unique mediator who has gained for us access to the Father through the Holy Spirit.
- **Merit** - The reward that God promises and gives to those who love him and who by his grace perform good works. One cannot earn justification or eternal life; they are the free gifts of God. Rather our merit is from God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Father freely justifies us in Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit; and Christians, by the

same Holy Spirit, are empowered to do good works of love and justice. In cooperating with the Holy Spirit, the faithful receive further grace and thus, in Christ, cooperate in the work of their salvation.

- **Oblation** - A gift or sacrifice offered to God.
- **Only-Begotten Son** - This title 'signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father he is the only Son of the Father (cf. Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf. Jn 1:1)' (CCC, no. 454). Jesus is the Son of God not by adoption but by nature.
- **Paschal** - Referring to Christ's work of redemption accomplished through his Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Through the Paschal Mystery, Jesus destroyed our death and restored us to life. The Paschal Mystery is celebrated and made present in the Liturgy so that we can obtain the fruit of Jesus' death and Resurrection, that is, the forgiveness of our sins and the new life of the Holy Spirit.
- **Patriarchs** - Title given to the venerable ancestors or 'fathers' of the Semitic peoples, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who received God's promise of election.
- **Precursor** - One who comes before as a herald. John the Baptist is the precursor of Jesus.
- **Provident race** - The free and undeserved gift that God gives us as he protects and governs all creation.
- **Redemption** - Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer because he frees us from our sin through his sacrificial death on the Cross.
- **Temporal** - What pertains to this world of time and history, as opposed to what pertains to God, such as our new life in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- **Venerate** - To show devotion and respect to holy things and people. Catholics venerate relics and saints. Veneration must be clearly distinguished from adoration and worship, both of which pertain solely to the Trinity and Jesus as the Son of God.

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G. Liturgical Participation

The celebration of Mass is an act of the whole assembly gathered for worship. In the Mass, the Church is joined to the action of Christ. We are joined to this divine action through Baptism, which incorporates us into the risen Christ. This action, which lies at “the center of the whole of Christian life” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], no. 16), is initiated not by us but by God acting in and through the Church as the Body of the risen Christ. The Liturgy is designed to bring about in all those who make up the worshiping assembly a “participation of the faithful, namely in body and in mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope, and charity” (GIRM, no. 18). To the extent that we are able to participate in this way, the work of redemption becomes personally effective for each of us. By such participation we make the actions and prayers of the Liturgy our own; we enter more fully into our personal communion with Christ’s redeeming act and perfect worship.

“In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God’s own possession and a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer their very selves. They should, moreover, take care to show this by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration. . . . Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the word of God, or in taking part in the prayers and in the singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by a participating together at the Lord’s table” (GIRM, nos. 95, 96). The participation of each person in the Liturgy is important. Each person needs to do his or her part.

ORDAINED MINISTRIES IN THE LITURGY

Bishops and priests are called to act in the Liturgy in the very person of Christ, on behalf of his people, pronouncing the most sacred prayers of our faith, presiding over the celebration of the sacred mysteries, explaining God’s Word and feeding God’s People on the Body and Blood of Christ. A bishop has the added responsibility of being the chief shepherd, the principal liturgist of his diocese in his role as the successor of the Apostles. By God’s grace others are ordained to the ministry of deacon. In the celebration of the Mass deacons proclaim the Gospel, occasionally preach the homily, and assist the bishop and priest in exercising their sacred duties.

Not all members of the parish community will have the time, energy, strength, or ability to serve in these roles. However, individuals must be careful not to excuse themselves too easily. What is important is that all understand that the celebration of Liturgy is not just the responsibility of the pastor, although he is delegated by the bishop to oversee the liturgical life of the parish. Pastors

need the help of people who are serious about living out their baptismal right and responsibility to worship.

THE ROLE OF THE BAPTIZED

This catalog of specialized roles might give the impression that those who are not exercising one of these roles are free to sit back passively and simply let the Liturgy happen around them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who come together for Liturgy do not have the luxury of acting as spectators, waiting for all to be done for them. “Full, conscious, and active participation” in the Liturgy (as commended by the Second Vatican Council) is not only their right but also their duty and their responsibility. That responsibility includes full engagement throughout the liturgical celebration. The baptized faithful who form the congregation are called to join in praise and thanksgiving in song and spoken word, to listen attentively to God’s Word, and to exercise their baptismal priesthood in prayer for the Church, the world, and all in need during the General Intercessions.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist the baptized faithful join their prayer to that of the priest celebrant, offering Christ the Victim, “not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him,” and offer themselves as well (GIRM, no. 95). Their participation culminates Word and feeding God’s People on the Body and Blood of Christ. A bishop has the added responsibility of being the chief shepherd, the principal liturgist of his diocese in his role as the successor of the Apostles. By God’s grace others are ordained to the ministry of deacon. In the celebration of the Mass deacons proclaim the Gospel, occasionally preach the homily, and assist the bishop and priest in exercising their sacred duties.

OTHER LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

In addition to the ordained ministries, some roles in the Liturgy are exercised by lay people who place their time and talent at the service of the liturgical assembly as acolytes (altar servers), lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, cantors, choir members, instrumentalists, leaders of song, and ushers. Others contribute their time and talent to planning and organizing the Liturgy; to keeping the church and the vestments, vessels, and appointments clean and well ordered; or to providing decorations that reflect the spirit of the liturgical feast or season.

This variety of offices and roles is desirable and should be maintained. It is desirable that individuals function in roles of service at Mass. For example, if a deacon is present, the priest celebrant or a concelebrant should not read the Gospel. The lector should not take on the role of a server or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. A wide variety of services needs to be performed, and it is preferable that different individuals exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully used and that these roles of service are not monopolized by a few.

Those engaged in liturgical roles need to be well prepared for those roles and to know how to carry them out with reverence, dignity, and understanding. Receiving the proper preparation requires a further gift of time on the part of the person being prepared as well as on the part of those in the parish responsible for the training of liturgical ministers. Finally, the practical task of assigning individuals to particular Masses and organizing the distribution of roles is another indispensable element in the fabric of well-ordered liturgical ministry in a parish.

All the baptized need to understand that part of their duty regarding the Liturgy is to accept some responsibility for the Liturgy, to place themselves and their God-given talents at the service of the liturgical community whenever possible. Whether one brings up the gifts at the Presentation; reads the Word of God; assists with the distribution of Communion and brings the Eucharist to those unable to be present at Mass; serves at the altar; provides music that augments the joy, solemnity, and festivity of the celebration; or serves the assembled community as an usher, he or she is contributing to the worship of the community and fulfilling the responsibility that comes with Baptism.

Not all members of the parish community will have the time, energy, strength, or ability to serve in these roles. However, individuals must be careful not to excuse themselves too easily. What is important is that all understand that the celebration of Liturgy is not just the responsibility of the pastor, although he is delegated by the bishop to oversee the liturgical life of the parish. Pastors need the help of people who are serious about living out their baptismal right and responsibility to worship.

THE ROLE OF THE BAPTIZED

This catalog of specialized roles might give the impression that those who are not exercising one of these roles are free to sit back passively and simply let the Liturgy happen around them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who come together for Liturgy do not have the luxury of acting as spectators, waiting for all to be done for them. “Full, conscious, and active participation” in the Liturgy (as commended by the Second Vatican Council) is not only their right but also their duty and their responsibility. That responsibility includes full engagement throughout the liturgical celebration. The baptized faithful who form the congregation are called to join in praise and thanksgiving in song and spoken word, to listen attentively to God’s Word, and to exercise their baptismal priesthood in prayer for the Church, the world, and all in need during the General Intercessions.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist the baptized faithful join their prayer to that of the priest celebrant, offering Christ the Victim, “not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him,” and offer themselves as well (GIRM, no. 95). Their participation culminates in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the sacrament that unites them more fully with Christ their Head and with one another. We need to be aware, therefore, that “participation”

does not refer primarily to external activity or function during the celebration of Mass; rather, it refers to a deeply spiritual, interior participation of mind and heart, filled with devotion and penetrating the very depths of the mysteries we celebrate.

In their sincere efforts to participate, those present minister to the priest celebrant, to others who serve in liturgical roles, and to one another. Their attention and active engagement in the celebration can draw from the priest celebrant and the other ministers the best they have to offer. Their enthusiastic song and verbal responses made with conviction can encourage others to sing and respond; their very presence at the celebration of Mass when so many other enticing options might have been chosen instead supports and reinforces others who have made the same choice.

The Liturgy, then, is about the action of God's own people, each with different offices and roles. When we play our roles in the Liturgy with our bodies, minds, and hearts fully engaged, we make to God a perfect sacrifice of praise.

REFERENCES

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Liturgy Documentary Series 2. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003.*
- *Second Vatican Council. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium). In Vatican Council II: Volume I: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (new rev. ed.), edited by Austin Flannery. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996.*

7. Liturgy and Life

At its heart, the Eucharist is a sacrament of communion, bringing us closer to God and to our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. If we live the fruits of the Eucharist in our daily lives, we will fill our families and our communities with the life-giving qualities that the Liturgy brings: hospitality, concern for the poor and vulnerable, self-offering, and thanksgiving.

An ancient saying in the Church reads “*lex orandi, lex credendi*,” meaning that the law of prayer is the law of faith. More loosely: as we pray, so we believe. To that we might add *lex vivendi*, meaning that as we pray, so we believe, and so we live. In the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, the bishops and translators have taken great care to ensure that the prayers accurately and fully reflect the mysteries of our faith. Thus, the words that we pray in each liturgical celebration will help to form and strengthen our understanding of the faith.

However, if the effects of the Liturgy stop at the doors of the church, we have not made our prayer and our faith part of our law of living. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches that the Eucharist helps us to grow in union with Christ, avoid sin, increase in charity, strengthen communion with our brothers and sisters, and recognize Christ in the poorest and most vulnerable members of society (see CCC, nos. 1391-1397). But what does that mean in daily life?

LIVING A LIFE OF PRAYER

Our prayer lives should not be limited to a single hour on Sunday mornings. In fact, the richer our prayer lives are throughout the week, the more fully we will be able to enter into the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Here are some ways to make your daily life more prayerful:

- ❖ Try attending daily Mass at least once a week. Your parish may have an early morning Mass, or a church near your job may offer a lunchtime Mass. Stop in a church before or after work or on your lunch hour for fifteen minutes of quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
- ❖ Stop in a church before or after work or on your lunch hour for fifteen minutes of quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
- ❖ Make it a practice to say grace before every meal— even if you are eating in the car.
- ❖ Schedule time for family prayer at least once a week. This prayer can be as simple as saying the Our Father or a decade of the Rosary together.

- ❖ Take time during the week to read or listen to the readings for the upcoming Sunday. The readings are available online (in print and audio) at <http://www.usccb.org/nab> .
- ❖ Begin your day with a brief prayer of thanksgiving to God, offering your day to him.
- ❖ End your day with an examination of conscience, looking at your successes and failures in what you have done or what you have failed to do. If you are aware of serious sin, receive the Sacrament of Penance before you receive Holy Communion again.

LIVING A LIFE OF LOVING SERVICE

Celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy and receiving Holy Communion should strengthen us to conform our lives more closely to the example of Christ. As Jesus knelt before his Apostles to wash their feet (see *Jn 13*), giving them an example of humble service, so must we who bear the name Christian live our lives in service to our brothers and sisters.

To help us in this endeavor, Church Tradition has identified works of mercy. These fourteen practices demand great sacrifice and generosity, but they also draw us more deeply into conformity with the Lord. Focusing on one of these works each week may be a practical way to integrate them into our personal, family, and parish lives. To help us in this endeavor, Church Tradition has identified works of mercy. These fourteen practices demand great sacrifice and generosity, but they also draw us more deeply into conformity with the Lord. Focusing on one of these works each week may be a practical way to integrate them into our personal, family, and parish lives.

Corporal Works of Mercy

- ❖ Feeding the hungry
- ❖ Sheltering the homeless
- ❖ Clothing the naked
- ❖ Visiting the sick
- ❖ Visiting the imprisoned
- ❖ Giving drink to the thirsty
- ❖ Burying the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- ❖ Converting sinners
- ❖ Instructing the ignorant
- ❖ Advising the doubtful
- ❖ Comforting the sorrowful
- ❖ Bearing wrongs patiently
- ❖ Forgiving injuries
- ❖ Praying for the living and dead

Our parishes and civil communities offer numerous opportunities to live out these works, from assisting with religious education classes or volunteering at a food bank to encouraging our legislators to put forward policies that protect the life and dignity of each person. As we grow in conformity to Christ, we see more clearly that all people are made in the image and likeness of God (see *Gn* 1:26) and so have an inherent value and dignity. By helping to build a more just and compassionate society, we act as Christ's Body in the world.

IT ALL COMES BACK TO THE EUCHARIST

Living the Christian life is not easy. "What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ . . . preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage" (CCC, no. 1392).

And so, each Sunday, we return to the Eucharistic table, bringing all our efforts of the previous week, the good and the bad, the successes and the failures, the joys and the sorrows. We gather with our brothers and sisters in the Lord and, together with our priest, we join these efforts to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, asking that God will receive what we offer back to him in humble thanksgiving. The Catechism explains it as follows:

The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. 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. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering. (CCC, no. 1368)

Then, strengthened by Holy Communion, we are once again sent forth into the world to glorify the Lord in our lives.

REFERENCE

- ❖ Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000.

B. Ministries and Roles within the Liturgical Assembly at Mass

When the Church comes together in the liturgical assembly to celebrate the Mass, or any other sacrament, her members do not gather simply as a crowd, as an amorphous, undifferentiated group of people. They gather in a variety of ministries and roles. If we are to understand the significance of these ministries and roles, we must begin with Baptism, for only one who through Baptism has been given a share in the priesthood of Christ is capable of participating in the public worship which is the liturgy of the Church. In fact, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council tells us that participation in the liturgy is the right and duty of all the baptized.

The first qualification, then, for any participant in the celebration of the Eucharist is that he or she has been baptized into the Body of Christ, the Church. Each time the members of the Church gather to worship, they do so because their baptism demands this of them. While all share in the priesthood of Christ which delegates them to worship, some members of the Church are called by God to serve in the ministerial priesthood as bishops and priests. Bishops and priests are privileged to act in the liturgy in the very person of Christ, on behalf of his people, pronouncing the most sacred prayers of our faith, presiding over the celebration of the sacred mysteries, explaining God's Word and feeding God's people on the body and blood of Christ. A bishop has the added responsibility of being the chief shepherd, the principal liturgist of his diocese and in that role is the successor of the Apostles. Others by God's grace are ordained to the ministry of deacon. In the celebration of the Mass deacons proclaim the Gospel and assist the bishop and priest in exercising their sacred duties.

In addition to the ordained ministries there are roles in the liturgy which are exercised by lay people who place their time and talent at the service of the liturgical assembly as acolytes (altar servers), lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, cantors, choir members, instrumentalists, leaders of song and ushers. Others contribute their time and talent to planning and organizing the liturgy, to keeping the church and the vestments, vessels and appointments clean and well-ordered or to providing decorations that reflect the spirit of the liturgical feast or season.

The General Instruction makes it very clear that this variety of offices and roles is desirable and should be maintained. In fact it goes so far as to state: "... all, therefore, whether they are ordained ministers or Christian faithful, in fulfilling their offices or their duty, should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to them." Not only, therefore, is it desirable that individuals function in roles of service at Mass, it is clear from the Instruction that if a deacon, for example, is present, the priest celebrant or a concelebrant should not read the Gospel. And the lector should not also take on the role of server and/or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. There is a wide variety of services to be performed, and it is desirable that different individuals

exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully utilized and these roles of service are not monopolized by a few.

It is not sufficient, however, simply to have a "warm body" filling a given role. Those engaged in liturgical roles need to be well-prepared for those roles and to know how to carry them out with reverence, dignity and understanding. Obtaining the proper preparation requires a further gift of time on the part of the person being prepared as well as on the part of those in the parish responsible for the training of liturgical ministers. Finally, the practical task of assigning individuals to particular Masses and organizing the distribution of roles is another indispensable element in the fabric of well-ordered liturgical ministry in a parish.

But before individuals can be prepared for liturgical roles, there must first be individuals who are willing to assume those roles. All the baptized need to understand that part of their duty regarding liturgy is to accept some responsibility for the liturgy, to place themselves and their God-given talents at the service of the liturgical community whenever possible. If liturgy is a duty as well as a right, then part of that duty for those able to undertake these tasks is the responsibility to assume such key roles as those of lector, server or acolyte, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, usher, choir member, etc. . Whether one brings up the gifts at the Presentation, reads the Word of God, assists with the distribution of Communion and brings the Eucharist to those unable to be present at Mass, serves at the altar, provides music that augments the joy, solemnity and festivity of the celebration or serves the assembled community as an usher, he or she is contributing to the worship of the community and fulfilling the responsibility that comes with Baptism.

Not all members of the parish community will have the time, energy, strength or ability to serve in these roles, however, individuals must be careful not to excuse themselves too easily. And it might also be helpful for us to reexamine our situation every so often. The time available to a business person or to parents with young children may be very limited. But eventually business people retire and children grow up, leaving those individuals with more free time at their disposal. What is important is that all understand that the celebration of liturgy is not just the responsibility of the pastor, although he is delegated by the Bishop to oversee the liturgical life of the parish. Pastors need the help of their people, the people who are serious about living out their baptismal right and responsibility to worship.

Finally, this catalogue of specialized roles might give the impression that those who are not exercising one of these roles are free to sit back passively and simply let the liturgy happen around them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who come together for liturgy do not have the luxury of acting as passive "pew potatoes," waiting for all to be done for them. The liturgy is not only their right, it is their duty, their responsibility, and that responsibility includes full engagement throughout the liturgical celebration. The baptized faithful who form the

congregation are called to join in praise and thanksgiving in song and spoken word; to listen attentively to God's Word, to exercise their baptismal priesthood in prayer for the Church, the world and all in need during the General Intercessions. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist they join their prayer to that of the priest celebrant, offering Christ the Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also together with him and offer themselves as well (GIRM n.95) and their participation culminates in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the sacrament which unites them more fully with Christ their Head and with one another.

In their sincere efforts to participate, those present minister to the priest celebrant, to others who serve in liturgical roles, and to one another. Their attention and active engagement in the celebration can draw from the priest celebrant and the other ministers the best they have to offer. Their enthusiastic song and verbal responses made with conviction can encourage others to sing and respond; their very presence at the celebration of Mass when so many other enticing options might have been chosen instead supports and reinforces others who have made the same choice.

The liturgy, then, is about the action of God's own people, each with different offices and roles, each office and role, from that of bishop and priest to that of usher and sacristan, one of service, not of privilege, a mirror of Christ who washed the feet of his disciples and instructed his followers to imitate his example of service.

9. Parts of the Mass

The Mass follows a “fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1346). Though the Mass is one united act of worship, it consists of many parts, each with its own purpose and meaning. The entries in this article follow the order in which the parts occur in the Mass.

- ❖ **Introductory Rites:** “- e rites that precede the Liturgy of the Word, namely, the Entrance, the Greeting, the Penitential Act, the Kyrie, the Glória in excélsis (Glory to God in the highest) and Collect, have the character of a beginning, an introduction, and a preparation. - eir purpose is to ensure that the faithful who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves properly to listen to the word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], no. 46).
- ❖ **Collect:** “The [opening] prayer . . . through which the character of the celebration finds expression” (GIRM, no. 54). - is prayer literally “collects” the prayers of all who are gathered into one prayer led by the priest celebrant.
- ❖ **Liturgy of the Word:** The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. As for the Homily, the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer, they develop and conclude it” (GIRM, no. 55).
- ❖ **Creed:** A brief, normative summary statement or profession of Christian faith. The Nicene Creed, which is recited or chanted at Mass, comes from the Councils of Nicea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381).
- ❖ **Canon of the Mass:** The central part of the Mass, also known as the Eucharistic Prayer or anaphora, which is the prayer of thanksgiving and consecration. It begins with the Preface Dialogue (i.e., “The Lord be with you. . . . Lift up your hearts. . . . Let us give thanks to the Lord our God”) and concludes with a final Doxology (“- rough him, and with him, and in him”) and Amen.
- ❖ **Epiclesis:** The prayer petitioning the Father to send the Holy Spirit to sanctify offerings of bread and wine so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

- ❖ **Consecration:** The consecration is that part of the Eucharistic Prayer during which the priest prays the Lord's words of institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. - rough this prayer the bread and wine become the risen Body and Blood of Jesus.
- ❖ **Anamnesis:** From the Greek, meaning "remembrance." We remember Jesus' historical saving deeds in the liturgical action of the Church, which inspires thanksgiving and praise. Every Eucharistic Prayer contains an anamnesis or memorial in which the Church calls to mind the Passion, Resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus.
- ❖ **Doxology:** A Christian prayer that gives praise and glory to God often in a special way to the three divine Persons of the Trinity. Liturgical prayers, including the Eucharistic Prayer, traditionally conclude with the Doxology "to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit."
- ❖ **Communion Rite:** The preparatory rites, consisting of the Lord's Prayer, the Rite of Peace, and the Fraction, lead the faithful to Holy Communion (see GIRM, no. 80). - e Prayer After Communion expresses the Church's gratitude for the mysteries celebrated and received.
- ❖ **Rite of Peace:** The rite "by which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament" (GIRM, no. 82).
- ❖ **Fraction:** "The priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread. . . . the gesture of breaking bread done by Christ at the Last Supper . . . in apostolic times gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name" (GIRM, no. 83).
- ❖ **Communion:** Holy Communion, the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.
- ❖ **Concluding Rites:** "To the Concluding Rites belong the following: brief announcements . . . ; the priest's greeting and blessing . . . ; the dismissal of the people by the deacon or the priest, so that each may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God; the kissing of the altar by the priest and the deacon, followed by a profound bow to the altar by the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers" (GIRM, no. 90).

REFERENCES

- Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2000.
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Liturgy Documentary Series 2. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003.

10. Postures and Gestures at Mass

In the celebration of Mass we raise our hearts, minds and voices to God, but we are creatures composed of body as well as spirit and so our prayer is not confined to our minds, hearts and voices, but is expressed by our bodies as well. When our bodies participate in our prayer we pray with our whole person, as the embodied spirits God created us to be, and this engagement of our entire being in prayer helps us to pray with greater attention.

During Mass we assume different postures: standing, kneeling, sitting, and we are also invited to make a variety of gestures. These postures and gestures are not merely ceremonial. They have profound meaning and, when done with understanding, can enhance our personal participation in Mass. In fact, these actions are the way in which we engage our bodies in the prayer that is the Mass.

Each posture we assume at Mass underlines and reinforces the meaning of the action in which we are taking part at that moment in our worship. Standing is a sign of respect and honor, so we stand as the celebrant who represents Christ enters and leaves the assembly. This posture, from the earliest days of the Church, has been understood as the stance of those who are risen with Christ and seek the things that are above. When we stand for prayer we assume our full stature before God, not in pride, but in humble gratitude for the marvelous thing God has done in creating and redeeming each one of us. By Baptism we have been given a share in the life of God, and the posture of standing is an acknowledgment of this wonderful gift. We stand for the Gospel, the pinnacle of revelation, the words and deeds of the Lord, and the bishops of the United States have chosen standing as the posture to be observed in this country for the reception of Communion, the sacrament which unites us in the most profound way possible with Christ who, now gloriously risen from the dead, is the cause of our salvation.

The posture of kneeling signified penance in the early Church: the awareness of sin casts us to the ground! So thoroughly was kneeling identified with penance that the early Christians were forbidden to kneel on Sundays and during the Easter Season when the prevailing spirit of the liturgy was that of joy and thanksgiving. In the Middle Ages kneeling came to signify the homage of a vassal to his lord, and more recently this posture has come to signify adoration. It is for this reason that the bishops of this country have chosen the posture of kneeling for the entire Eucharistic Prayer.

Sitting is the posture of listening and meditation, so the congregation sits for the pre-Gospel readings and may also sit for the period of meditation following Communion.

Gestures too involve our bodies in prayer. The most familiar of these is the Sign of the Cross with which we begin Mass and with which, in the form of a blessing, the Mass concludes.

Because it was by his death on the cross that Christ redeemed humankind, we trace the sign of the cross on our foreheads, lips and hearts at the beginning of the Gospel. Fr. Romano Guardini, a scholar and professor of liturgy wrote of this gesture:

When we cross ourselves, let it be with a real sign of the cross. Instead of a small, cramped gesture that gives no notion of its meaning, let us make a large, unhurried sign, from forehead to breast, from shoulder to shoulder, consciously feeling how it includes the whole of us, our thoughts, our attitudes, our body and soul, every part of us all at once, how it consecrates and sanctifies us ... (Romano Guardini, **Sacred Signs**, 1927)

But there are other gestures that intensify our prayer at Mass. During the Confiteor the action of striking our breasts at the words through my own fault can strengthen my awareness that my sin is my fault. In the Creed we are invited to bow at the words which commemorate the Incarnation: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. This gesture signifies our profound respect and gratitude to Christ who, though God, did not hesitate to come among us as a human being, sharing our human condition in order to save us from sin and restore us to friendship with God. This gratitude is expressed with even greater solemnity on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord and on Christmas when we genuflect at these words.

The *Our Father* is followed by the Exchange of Peace, the gesture which we express through a prayerful greeting of peace that we are at peace, not enmity, with others. This exchange is symbolic. The persons near me with whom I share the peace signify for me, as I do for them, the broader community of the Church and all humankind.

Finally, with the new General Instruction, we are asked to make a sign of reverence, to be determined by the bishops of each country or region, before receiving Communion standing. The bishops of this country have determined that the sign which we will give before Communion is to be a bow, a gesture through which we express our reverence and give honor to Christ who comes to us as our spiritual food.

In addition to serving as a vehicle for the prayer of beings composed of body and spirit, the postures and gestures in which we engage at Mass have another very important function. The Church sees in these common postures and gestures both a symbol of the unity of those who have come together to worship and a means of fostering that unity. We are not free to change these postures to suit our own individual piety, for the Church makes it clear that our unity of posture and gesture is an expression of our participation in the one Body formed by the baptized with Christ, our head. When we stand, kneel, sit, bow and sign ourselves in common action, we given unambiguous witness that we are indeed the Body of Christ, united in heart, mind and spirit.

11 Praying with Body, Mind, and Voice

In the celebration of Mass we raise our hearts and minds to God. We are creatures of body as well as spirit, so our prayer is not confined to our minds and hearts. It is expressed by our bodies as well. When our bodies are engaged in our prayer, we pray with our whole person. Using our entire being in prayer helps us to pray with greater attentiveness.

During Mass we assume different postures—standing, kneeling, sitting—and we are also invited to make a variety of gestures. These postures and gestures are not merely ceremonial. They have profound meaning and, when done with understanding, can enhance our participation in the Mass.

STANDING

Standing is a sign of respect and honor, so we stand as the celebrant who represents Christ enters and leaves the assembly. From the earliest days of the Church, this posture has been understood as the stance of those who have risen with Christ and seek the things that are above. When we stand for prayer, we assume our full stature before God, not in pride but in humble gratitude for the marvelous things God has done in creating and redeeming each one of us. By Baptism we have been given a share in the life of God, and the posture of standing is an acknowledgment of this wonderful gift. We stand for the proclamation of the Gospel, which recounts the words and deeds of the Lord. The bishops of the United States have chosen standing as the posture to be observed for the reception of Communion.

KNEELING

In the early Church, kneeling signified penance. So thoroughly was kneeling identified with penance that the early Christians were forbidden to kneel on Sundays and during the Easter season, when the prevailing spirit of the Liturgy was one of joy and thanksgiving. In the Middle Ages kneeling came to signify homage, and more recently this posture has come to signify adoration, especially before the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is for this reason that the bishops of this country have chosen the posture of kneeling for the entire Eucharistic Prayer.

SITTING

Sitting is the posture of listening and meditation, so the congregation sits for the pre-Gospel readings and the homily and may also sit for the period of meditation following Communion. All should strive to assume a seated posture during the Mass that is attentive rather than merely at rest.

PROCESSIONS

Every procession in the Liturgy is a sign of the pilgrim Church, the body of those who believe in Christ, on their way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. The Mass begins with the procession of the priest and ministers to the altar. The Book of the Gospels is carried in procession to the ambo. The gifts of bread and wine are brought forward to the altar. Members of the assembly come forward in procession—eagerly, attentively, and devoutly—to receive Holy Communion. We who believe in Christ are moving in time toward that moment when we will leave this world and enter into the joy of the Lord in the eternal Kingdom he has prepared for us.

MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

We begin and end Mass by marking ourselves with the Sign of the Cross. Because it was by his death on the Cross that Christ redeemed humankind, we trace the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads, lips, and hearts at the beginning of the Gospel, praying that the Word of God may be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. The cross reminds us in a physical way of the Paschal Mystery we celebrate: the death and Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

BOWING

Bowing signifies reverence, respect, and gratitude. In the Creed we bow at the words that commemorate the Incarnation. We also bow as a sign of reverence before we receive Communion. The priest and other ministers bow to the altar, a symbol of Christ, when entering or leaving the sanctuary. As a sign of respect and reverence even in our speech, we bow our heads at the name of Jesus, at the mention of the Three Persons of the Trinity, at the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the name of the saint whose particular feast or memorial is being observed (see GIRM, no. 275).

GENUFLECTING

As a sign of adoration, we genuflect by bringing our right knee to the floor. Many people also make the Sign of the Cross as they bend their knee. Traditionally, Catholics genuflect on entering and leaving church if the Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary of the Church. The priest and deacon genuflect to the tabernacle on entering and leaving the sanctuary. The priest also genuflects in adoration after he shows the Body and Blood of Christ to the people after the consecration and again before inviting the people to Holy Communion.

ORANS

The priest frequently uses this ancient prayer posture, extending his hands to his sides, slightly elevated. *Orans* means “praying.” Early Christian art frequently depicts the saints and others standing in this posture, offering their prayers and surrendering themselves, with hands uplifted to the Lord, in a gesture that echoes Christ’s outstretched arms as he offered himself on the Cross.

PROSTRATING

In this rarely used posture, an individual lies full-length on the floor, face to the ground. A posture of deep humility, it signifies our willingness to share in Christ’s death so as to share in his Resurrection (see Rom 6). It is used at the beginning of the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday and also during the Litany of the Saints in the Rite of Ordination, when those to be ordained deacons, priests, and bishops prostrate themselves in humble prayer and submission to Christ.

SINGING

“By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension. Thus, it is no wonder that singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to his people” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sing to the Lord*, no. 2). As we raise our voices as one in the prayers, dialogues, and chants of the Mass, most especially in the Eucharistic Prayer, as well as the other hymns and songs, we each lend our individual voices to the great hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Triune God.

PRAISING IN UNISON

In the Mass, the worshiping assembly prays in one voice, speaking or singing together the words of the prayers. By saying the same words at the same time, we act as what we truly are—one Body united in Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism.

BEING SILENT

“Silence in the Liturgy allows the community to reflect on what it has heard and experienced, and to open its heart to the mystery celebrated” (*Sing to the Lord*, no. 118). We gather in silence, taking time to separate ourselves from the concerns of the world and enter into the sacred action. We reflect on the readings in silence. We may take time for silent reflection and prayer after Holy Communion. These times of silence are not merely times when nothing happens; rather, they are opportunities for us to enter more deeply in what God is doing in the Mass, and, like Mary, to keep “all these things, reflecting on them” in our hearts (Lk 2:19).

CONCLUSION

The Church sees in these common postures and gestures both a symbol of the unity of those who have come together to worship and also a means of fostering that unity. We are not free to change these postures to suit our own individual piety, for the Church makes it clear that our unity of posture and gesture is an expression of our participation in the one Body formed by the baptized with Christ, our head. When we stand, kneel, sit, bow, and sign ourselves in common action, we give unambiguous witness that we are indeed the Body of Christ, united in body, mind, and voice.

REFERENCE

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. Pastoral Liturgy Series 4. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007.

12 The Reception of Holy Communion at Mass

The Church understands the Communion Procession, in fact every procession in liturgy, as a sign of the pilgrim Church, the body of those who believe in Christ, on their way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. All our lives we who believe in Christ are moving in time toward that moment when we will be taken by death from this world and enter into the joy of the Lord in the eternal Kingdom he has prepared for us.

The liturgical assembly of the baptized that comes together for the celebration of the Eucharist is a witness to, a manifestation of, the pilgrim Church. When we move in procession, particularly the procession to receive the body and blood of Christ in Communion, we are a sign, a symbol of that pilgrim Church 'on the way.' For some, however, the experience of the Communion Procession is far more prosaic, analogous perhaps to standing on line in the supermarket or at the motor vehicle bureau. A perception such as this is a dreadfully inaccurate and impoverished understanding of what is a significant religious action.

The Communion Procession is an action of the Body of Christ. At Christ's invitation, extended by the priest acting in Christ's person: Happy are they who are called to his supper, the members of the community move forward to share in the sacred meal, to receive the body and blood of Christ which is the sign and the source of their unity. In fact, each time we move forward together to receive the body and blood of the Lord, we join the countless ranks of all the baptized who have gone before us, our loved ones, the canonized and uncanonized saints down through the ages, who at their time in history formed a part of this mighty stream of believers.

This action by Christ's body, the Church assembled for the Eucharist, is manifested and supported by the Communion Hymn, a hymn in praise of Christ sung by the united voices of those who believe in him and share his life. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal takes this hymn very seriously, mandating that it should begin at the Communion of the priest and extend until the last person has received Communion.

For some, however, the singing of this hymn is perceived as an intrusion on their own prayer, their private thanksgiving after Communion. In fact, however, this hymn is prayer, the corporate thanksgiving prayer of the members of Christ's Body, united with one another. Over and over again the prayers of the liturgy and the norms of the General Instruction emphasize this fundamental concept of the unity of the baptized, stressing that when we come together to participate in the Eucharistic celebration we come, not as individuals, but as united members of Christ's body. In each of the Eucharistic Prayers, though the petition is worded in slightly different ways, God is asked to send his Holy Spirit to make us one body, one spirit in Christ; the General Instruction admonishes the faithful that they should become one body, whether by hearing the word of God, or joining in prayers and singing ...(GIRM, no. 96) it describes one of

the purposes of the opening song of the Mass as to ... intensify the unity of those who have been gathered and says of the Communion Chant that its function is to express outwardly the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, ... and to highlight the communitarian nature of the procession to receive Communion.

It is difficult for some of us to embrace this emphasis on Mass as the action of a community rather than an individual act of my own faith and piety, but it is important that we make every effort to do so. Christ himself at the Last Supper pleaded with his Father: Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us ... Father may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you ... Jn. 17: 11; 21. Baptism has joined us to Christ and to one another as the vine and its branches. The life of Christ, the Holy Spirit, animates each of us individually, and all of us corporately and guides us together in our efforts to become one in Christ.

Finally, the fact that the Communion Procession is a profoundly religious action tells us something about the way in which we should participate in this procession. We are the Body of Christ, moving forward to receive the Christ who makes us one with himself and with one another. Our procession should move with dignity; our bearing should be that of those who know they have been redeemed by Christ and are coming to receive their God!

The new edition of the General Instruction asks the Conference of Bishops in each country to determine the posture to be used for the reception of Communion and the act of reverence to be made by each person as he or she receives Communion. The Conference of Bishops of the United States has determined that in this country Communion will be received standing and that a bow will be the act of reverence made by those receiving. These norms may require some adjustment on the part of those who have been used to other practices, however the significance of unity in posture and gesture as a symbol of our unity as members of the one body of Christ should be the governing factor in our own actions.

Those who receive Communion may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, and the decision should be that of the individual receiving, not of the person distributing Communion. If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If one is right handed the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. If one is left-handed this is reversed. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person distributing.

The person distributing Communion says audibly to each person approaching, 'The Body of Christ'. This formula should not be altered, as it is a proclamation which calls for a response of faith on the part of the one who receives. The communicant should audibly respond 'Amen,' indicating by that response his or her belief that this small wafer of bread, the wine in this chalice are in reality the body and blood of Christ the Lord.

When one receives from the chalice, the same proclamation is made by the person distributing Communion and the Communicant again responds 'Amen.' It should be noted that it is never permissible for a person to dip the host he or she has received into the chalice. If, for some reason, the communicant is not able or willing to drink from the cup then that person should receive only under the form of bread.

It seems appropriate to conclude this reflection on the Communion Procession and the reception of Communion with a quotation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:16, 17):

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond 'Amen' ('yes,' it is true!') and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, 'the Body of Christ and respond 'Amen.' Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true. (St. Augustine) 'CCC n.1396)

13 Scripture and the Mass

It is clear that Sacred Scripture has a revered and important place in the eucharistic Liturgy. Every Mass includes a Liturgy of the Word. The main elements of the Liturgy of the Word are biblical readings and the singing of a psalm. The Liturgy of the Word reaches its high point in the proclamation of the Gospel.

However, the use of Scripture in the Mass does not end when the Liturgy of the Word has finished. In fact, the words of Scripture flow throughout the prayers of the Mass. One of the goals of the new translation of the Missal was to make clearer the links between the prayers of the Mass and the text of Scripture. Some of the most noticeable changes reflect the words of the Bible more clearly. Let's take a look at some of these changes.

A BIBLICAL GREETING

At several points in the Mass, the priest or deacon and the people engage in the following dialogue:

Priest or Deacon: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit. (The Order of Mass, 2)

The first words come from a greeting of Boaz, the great-grandfather of King David: "Boaz . . . said to the harvesters, 'The Lord be with you!' and they replied, 'The Lord bless you!'" (Ru 2:4). The people's response reflects the language of St. Paul. In Galatians, he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen" (Gal 6:18); the Second Letter to Timothy closes with a similar wish: "The Lord be with your spirit" (2 Tm 4:22). The Letter to the Philippians ends with "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Phil 4:23).

The new language, though a bit unfamiliar to our ears, more directly reflects the biblical understanding that, through Baptism, the Spirit of God dwells in us and unites us as one Body in Christ.

WELCOMING THE LORD

Immediately before coming forward to receive the Lord in Holy Communion, we welcome the Lord:

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. (*The Order of Mass*, 132)

This prayer quotes the words of the centurion who asked Jesus to cure his servant. He would not presume to ask Jesus to come to his home. He trusted in the authority of Jesus' healing word, saying: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed" (Mt 8:8; see Lk 7:6-7). This new phrasing reminds us that, in receiving Holy Communion, we are to emulate the centurion's humility and faith.

FOR THE MANY

One of the most notable changes will come in the words that the priest speaks in consecrating the wine as the Blood of Christ:

Take this, all of you, and drink from it:
for this is the chalice of my Blood,
the Blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which will be poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins. (*The Order of Mass*, 90)

The newly translated text more closely reflects the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper: "then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Mt 26:27-28). Much attention has focused on a single change in this text: from "for all" to "for many." this change is unique to the English language. Other languages, including Spanish, French, and German, have already been using language that more closely reflects Jesus' words at the Last Supper.

This new text does not mean that God's love is limited or that only some may be saved. Rather, it reflects the fact that human beings may choose to accept the grace of salvation and live their lives in the light of this grace.

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

If we recognize the biblical references that underlie the liturgical texts, we will have a fuller understanding of their meaning. For example, Eucharistic Prayer I includes the following passage:

Be pleased to look upon these offerings
with a serene and kindly countenance,
and to accept them,
as you were pleased to accept
the gifts of your servant Abel the just,
the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith,
and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek,
a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim. (*The Order of Mass*, 93)

If we do not know who Abel (Gn 4:4) and Melchizedek (Gn 14:18-20) are and if we do not understand the importance of Abraham's sacrifice (Gn 15:7-21; 22:1-14), we will not fully appreciate the concept of sacrifice and how our celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice ties us to our ancestors in the faith, from the very beginning.

THE WORD OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE AND THE EUCHARIST

Translating the liturgical texts with a close eye to their correspondence with the texts of Scripture can help us to develop a greater appreciation of the close links between the prayers of the Mass and Sacred Scripture. These close links can help draw us more deeply into the theological meaning of the texts.

For example, before the Communion Rite, the priest breaks the Host and shows it to the people, saying:

Behold the Lamb of God,
 behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
 (*The Order of Mass*, 132)

The first part of this prayer echoes the words of John the Baptist, heralding the coming of the Christ: "The next day he [John] saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'" (Jn 1:29). In the same way, we who are united in the Body of Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism and strengthened in the Eucharist are called to point others to Jesus through our words and actions.

The second part of this prayer reflects the words of the Book of Revelation: “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb’” (Rev 19:9). In this prayer, we are not rejoicing that we may receive the Eucharist. Instead, we rejoice for those who have been found worthy to share in the heavenly Liturgy, the supper of the Lamb, and we pray that one day, we may join them in the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION

By delving more deeply into the scriptural background of the Mass, we come to know more closely Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, whose Paschal Mystery we celebrate.

REFERENCE

- Excerpts from the English translation of the Roman Missal ©2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL). All rights reserved.

14 Ten Questions on the Roman Missal, Third Edition

1. WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR A NEW TRANSLATION?

Pope John Paul II issued the third edition of the Missale Romanum (the Latin text of the Roman Missal) during the Jubilee Year in 2000. This new edition included many new texts requiring translation. In addition, the experience of the years after the Second Vatican Council gave rise to a desire for more formal and literal translations of the original Latin texts. This new translation will employ the best of what we have learned about translation and liturgical language in two generations of celebrating the Liturgy in the vernacular. It will provide an opportunity to reflect ever more deeply on the eucharistic celebration that lies at the heart of the Church's life.

2. WHO IS DOING THE WORK OF TRANSLATION?

The process of translating liturgical texts from the original Latin is a highly consultative work done by several groups. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) prepares English translations of liturgical texts on behalf of the conferences of bishops of English-speaking countries. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the other member conferences receive draft translations of each text and have the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions to ICEL. Then ICEL proposes a second draft, which each conference approves and submits to the Vatican for final approval. Each conference reserves the right to amend or modify a particular text.

At the Vatican, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments examines the translated texts, offers authoritative approval (*recognitio*) of the texts, and grants permission for their use. Currently the Congregation is aided by the recommendations of *Vox Clara*, a special committee of bishops and consultants from English-speaking countries. The translation and review process is guided by the guidelines in *Liturgiam Authenticam*, issued in 2001, an instruction from the Congregation that outlines the principles and rules for liturgical translation. In 2007, the Congregation also issued a *ratio* outlining the specific rules for translation in English.

3. WHAT'S NEW OR DIFFERENT ABOUT THE REVISED TRANSLATION?

The style of the translation of the third edition is different. In accord with the rules for translation established by the Holy See, the revised translation follows the style of the original Latin texts more closely, including concrete images, repetition, parallelisms, and rhythm. The English used in the Mass texts is more formal and dignified in style. Where possible, the texts follow the language of Scripture and include many poetic images.

In addition, the third edition contains prayers for the celebration of recently canonized saints, additional prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers, additional Masses and prayers for various needs and intentions, and some updated and revised rubrics (or instructions) for the celebration of the Mass.

4. WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THE APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MISSAL?

After the Latin *Missale Romanum* was published in 2002, ICEL began its work of preparing a draft English translation of the text. ICEL presented the first section—the Order of Mass, which contains the fixed prayers of the Mass, including the people's parts—to the English speaking conferences of bishops in 2004. The USCCB approved the final version in 2006, and the Holy See confirmed this section in June 2008. The remaining sections were approved between 2007 and 2009. The USCCB completed its approval of the Missal in November 2009. The Holy See granted the final approval of the text in the spring of 2010. Cardinal Francis George, OMI, president of the USCCB, announced that parishes may begin using the revised translation on November 27, 2011.

5. CAN WE START USING THE TEXTS APPROVED BY THE BISHOPS IMMEDIATELY?

The translation of the *Missale Romanum* could not be used in the celebration of the Mass until the complete text was confirmed by the Holy See. Now that the translation has received the *recognitio*, the USCCB has established the first day on which the new translation may be used. Use of the revised text requires preparation and catechesis for both priests and the faithful. When the time comes to use the texts in the celebration of

the Mass, priests will be properly trained, the faithful will have an understanding and appreciation of what is being prayed, and musical settings for the liturgical texts will be readily available.

6. WHAT WILL THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION LOOK LIKE?

Now that the *recognitio* has been granted, final preparation and publication of the Missal will commence. Catechesis on the new translation and on the Liturgy itself will become even more important. Training for priests, music ministers, and other liturgical leaders (liturgy committees and liturgical commissions), as well as formation for all Catholics, will help to ensure the successful implementation of the new text.

7. WHAT WILL THE NEW MISSAL MEAN IN MY PARISH?

In the months before the revised translation is implemented, parishes will have to do many things. The parish will have to replace liturgical books and participation aids. Priests will practice proclaiming the new texts and will prepare homilies helping the faithful to understand the new translation and to deepen their appreciation for the Liturgy. The music ministers and the people will learn new musical settings for the parts of the Mass (such as the Gloria and the Sanctus). Catechists and teachers will help parishioners learn the new prayers. Parishes may also use this opportunity to undertake a thorough reexamination of their liturgical practices.

8. IF MY PARISH LIKES THE OLD TRANSLATION BETTER, CAN WE CONTINUE USING THAT ONE?

Now that the Holy See has granted the *recognitio* to the revised translation, the USCCB has established a date for first use and a date for mandatory use. No parish may continue to use the current translation after the mandatory use date. Parishes will need to use the period before the mandatory use date to help parishioners renew their love for the Sacred Liturgy, to understand the changes, and to develop an appreciation for the revised translation.

9. DO THESE CHANGES MEAN THAT THE OLD TRANSLATION WAS NOT VALID AND ORTHODOX?

The current translation was approved by the conferences of bishops and confirmed by the Holy See. Until the new text becomes effective, the current translation remains the valid ordinary form of the Liturgy in the Roman Rite. The revised translation attempts to address some inadequacies in the present translation by introducing a more elevated style of language and by retaining many poetic texts and scriptural allusions. The current translation fostered the faith of two generations of Catholics and retains a valid place in church history.

10. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DOES THE NEW MISSAL OFFER THE CHURCH?

Implementing the new Missal will give the Church an opportunity to take a fresh look at its liturgical practice and to renew its celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, which is the “source and summit” of Christian life (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [*Lumen Gentium*], no. 11). The faithful, encountering the Liturgy anew in the new text, can deepen their sharing in Christ’s sacrifice, offering their lives to the Father as they worship “in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23).

15 The Worshipping Assembly at Mass

The celebration of Mass is a corporate act, an act of the whole assembly gathered for worship. All the particular ministries serve this corporate function (GIRM, no. 27). In the Mass, the Church is joined to the action of Christ, *the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit* (no. 16). We are joined to this divine action through baptism, which incorporates us into the risen Christ. This action, which lies at the center of the whole Christian life (no. 16) is not initiated by us but by God acting in and through the Church as the body of the risen Christ. It becomes our action only to the extent that we give ourselves to this mystery of redemptive worship. The liturgy is designed to bring about in all those who make up the worshipping assembly *a participation of the faithful both in body and mind, a participation burning with faithful, hope, and charity* (no. 18). To the extent that we are able to participate in this way, the work of redemption becomes personally effective for each of us. By such participation, the General Instruction says, we make the actions and prayers of the liturgy our own; we enter more fully into our personal communion with Christ's redeeming act and perfect worship (see no. 54, 55, etc.).

In the celebration of Mass the faithful are a holy people, a chosen people, a royal priesthood: they give thanks to God and offer the Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him and learn to offer themselves. They should endeavor to make this clear by their deep sense of reverence for God and their charity toward brothers and sisters who share with them in the celebration (no. 95). They should become one body, whether by hearing the word of God, or joining in prayers and liturgical song, or above all by offering the sacrifice together and sharing together in the Lord's table (no. 96).

Because the whole liturgy is a corporate act of the gathered assembly (GIRM no. 34; Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 1144), there are certain parts of the Mass that are to be done by the whole assembly, the congregation of the faithful and all the ministers, in order to express the corporate nature of this act. Through these actions, the entire congregation of the faithful joins itself to Christ in acknowledging the great things that God has done and in offering the sacrifice (no. 78). These acts include:

- Listening with reverence to the readings of God's word (GIRM no. 29);
- Engaging in the dialogue of prayer through acclamations, greetings, and responses to spoken and sung prayers (no. 34-37) in a tone suitable to the text (no. 38);

- Joining in an action through common postures and gestures (no. 42);
- Participating in communal silence (no.45)
- Because of their baptismal dignity, letting themselves be included in the offering symbolized by incensation (no. 75);
- Participating in the greeting of peace as a sign of ecclesial communion and love for each other (no. 82)
- Participating in specific spoken prayers and other texts, namely:
 - the formula of general confession during the penitential rite (no. 51);
 - the profession of faith (no. 67-68);
 - the general intercessions (no. 69);
 - the Lord's Prayer (no. 81);
 - the prayer of humility before sacramental communion (no. 84);
- Participating in the offering during the Eucharistic Prayer, which is spoken or chanted by the priest, but in which all should join as the Church to offer the "spotless Victim to the Father in the Holy Spirit" and "offer themselves and so day by day to surrender themselves, through Christ the Mediator, to an ever more complete union with God and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all" (no. 79f);
- Participating in liturgical song, because singing is a way of expressing both the corporate nature of the act of worship and the intense union to be achieved between God and the Church in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is a union so intense and total that it is described as a union between lovers whose nature is best expressed vocally in song (no. 39). Singing is also an act which unifies and focuses the individual (no. 39), thus encouraging that "participation in body and spirit that is conscious, active, full, and motivated by faith, hope, and charity" (no. 18). These songs and acclamations are normally to be sung, in whole or in part, by all the participants:
 - opening liturgical song (no. 48);
 - Kyrie (no. 52);
 - Gloria (no. 53);
 - Responsorial psalm (no. 61);

- Gospel acclamation (no. 62);
- Song at the preparation of gifts (no. 74)
- Sanctus, memorial acclamation, and Amen (no. 79, 151);
- The Lord's Prayer (no. 81);
- Lamb of God (no. 83);
- the optional psalm, canticle of praise, or hymn after communion (no. 88).
- For those who are properly disposed (no. 80), full, active, and conscious participation is expressed in partaking in the Holy Communion of the Lord, receiving in the one bread consecrated at this Mass the Lord's body and blood, in the same way that the apostles received them from Christ's own hands (no. 72.3).