

PART ONE
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

WE COME TOGETHER TO MEET THE LORD

SUNDAY AS THE HIGHPOINT OF OUR WEEK

From the very beginning, the early Christian communities realised the importance of Sunday. It is the day of Jesus' **Resurrection**, a day of **joy** and **rest**, as well as **charity**. Sunday is the **Lord's Day**, the day when we are called to **remember** what God has done and continues to do for us. This, then, is the day the Lord's people are called to **keep holy**, together. The observance begins with the evening of the preceding day.

SUNDAY - EUCHARIST – COMMUNITY

Early Christians did what Jesus had asked them to do; they gathered and celebrated the meal Jesus had shared with them, the Eucharist. We also know this as the Mass. This gathering of the community on a Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist gave rise to a basic principle of the Church: ***There can be no Sunday without the Eucharist and no Eucharist without an assembly of the faithful.***

This principle endures to this day. It led Voltaire to declare, "If you want to kill Christianity, you must abolish Sunday." As members of the Christian community, we are each called to gather with the rest of our faith community on a Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. The Sunday Mass is the place where we gather as a parish, as a community, as the People of God. This is at the heart of the life of the Church. It is the highpoint of our Christian life, where God nourishes us to go out and live as Christians.



A Glossary of Terms

- Church**- those called together or gathered by God: *ecclesia*
- Eucharist** – Derived from the Greek word 'to give thanks'. It can refer to the consecrated Bread and Wine, as well as the whole of the Mass
- Order of Mass** – The texts and sequence of the Mass that does not change from week to week
- The Roman Missal** – The ritual book that contains all the prayers and rubrics (instructions) to be observed in the celebration of Mass in any situation.
- Assembly** – another name for the congregation. It highlights that God calls us together as one body of people
- Presider** – the priest celebrant who leads the celebration of Mass

**CALLED BY GOD, WE GATHER WITH CHRIST AND ONE ANOTHER:
*all are welcome, all are wanted, all are needed***

"We Christians have been called one-by-one: no one of us is Christian by pure chance. No one."



As baptised members of the Church, we are part of a faith community called by God. When we gather for Mass on a Sunday we do so in response to God's personal invitation to each one of us. Ever before the Mass begins, each of us is called, welcome, wanted and needed.

We are not here to simply 'get Mass'. As Catholics, on a Sunday we are obliged and are called to join with the rest of our community to offer our worship, our praise and thanksgiving to God. We are here to **celebrate** Mass – this inserts us into the heart of the Mass, calling all of us to be **active participants** rather than silent spectators. That is why we need to come ready to pray, ready to be attentive to the words and actions that unfold in our midst.

And when we gather in the name of the Lord we know that Christ is with us. For Christ told us where two or three are gathered in his name that he is there. (Matthew 18:20) From the beginning of Mass, therefore, we are invited to welcome Christ present in his people. *Look around next time you are at Mass and see the face of Christ in those who have gathered with you!*

THE SHAPE OF THE MASS

Introductory Rites

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Concluding Rites

THE PURPOSE OF THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Each of us, individually or with our families, make our way to Sunday Mass. As we enter the Church, we bless ourselves with holy water as a reminder of our common baptism. We may greet friends and strangers who have come with a common purpose. Taking our place, we genuflect towards the tabernacle reverencing the presence of Christ in the reserved Sacrament and we pause for a moment of silent prayer, preparing ourselves to enter into this great act of worship with the rest of our faith community.

The Mass itself begins with the Introductory Rites - a series of words and actions that begins with the *Entrance Procession*, and its accompanying hymn, and ends with the Opening Prayer or *Collect*.

The function of the Introductory Rites is to enable us as a community, coming from different places and with a variety of concerns, to become aware of ourselves as a gathered assembly; establishing a unity or communion among us and preparing us to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the sacrament.

Exploring the Introductory Rites

* **ENTRANCE PROCESSION AND HYMN:** This procession of the priest celebrant and ministers through the body of people is a visible reminder to us that we gather as the Body of Christ. Christ is with us and we **stand** together as a sign of welcome and reverence for his presence among us. Our hymn unites us in one voice of praise. The priest reverences the altar with a bow and a kiss as the altar is a symbol of Christ at the heart of this assembly.

* **GREETING:** All make the sign of the Cross and the priest celebrant greets us from the Chair in words taken from Scripture. These words remind us that in our gathering, the God of the Trinity, the God of grace, love and peace, is with us and working upon us through this celebration.

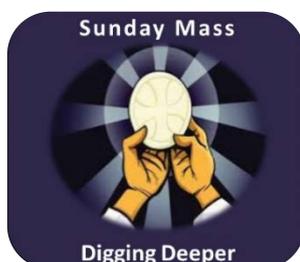
* **PENITENTIAL ACT:** Before we enter deeper into the Mass we take one more moment to prepare ourselves, using one of three prayer options given to us in the Missal. Conscious that we all likely come with things we would like to change in our lives, behaviours we would like to be different, in the *Confiteor* we acknowledge before our brothers and sisters that we have sinned, and we ask for their prayers. But even greater than our sin, we trust in the enduring mercy and love of God, and so we can pray in confidence, *Lord, have mercy*. On some Sundays, especially in Easter Time, in place of the usual Penitential Act, the blessing and sprinkling of water to recall our baptism may take place.

* **GLORIA:** On Sundays outside of Lent and Advent, on solemnities and feasts, the *Gloria* is sung or recited. In this joyful hymn of praise the gathered assembly unites with the heavenly choirs. Within this hymn we recall the five actions of the Mass we are each called to: we are here *to praise, bless, adore, glorify and thank* our God.

* **OPENING PRAYER / COLLECT:** The Introductory Rites conclude with an opening prayer, called the Collect. This prayer gathers (or collects) all our prayers into one prayer of the day. It has a four-fold pattern of 1) an invitation from the priest celebrant to the assembly to pray, 2) a brief silence to gather the prayers of our hearts into one, 3) the prayer itself proclaimed by the priest celebrant and 4) our assent to the prayer in our 'Amen'. The silence within this prayer can help create a sense of unity among the assembly. Like all our prayers in the liturgy, we make our prayer to God the Father, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. This can be a timely reminder to us that the celebration of the Mass is the action of Christ and of the people of God, united in common worship.

See kandle.ie for:

- + an iCatholic video link exploring the Introductory Rites and other parts of the Mass
- + a list of dates and venues for the Lenten Course: Exploring the Mass – Signposts on the Road to Emmaus



We Come together...

