

PART THREE THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

WE COME TOGETHER TO SHARE IN CHRIST'S BODY AND BLOOD



Gifts of Bread and Wine

Jesus purposely chose bread and wine to be the signs of his Body and Blood. Bread is known as the staff of life; it is a basic food for life. Jesus is our Bread of Life.

Wine was used by Jesus at the Last Supper to represent his Blood, shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. It also alludes to the heavenly banquet in which we will share because of Christ's sacrifice.

Both bread and wine require our co-operation with the work of creation. Wheat and grapes; bread and wine. 'Fruit of the vine and work of human hands'. A powerful reminder to us that God always seeks our co-operation and participation in what God is doing for us and to us in love.

In Memory of Him...

In this part of the Mass we join with Christ in doing what he asked us to do in memory of him. We share in the **meal** that he had with his disciples, his followers, in the upper room on Holy Thursday: The Last Supper.

Jesus saw in this meal a foreshadowing of his own **sacrifice** of love on the Cross. He knew that he would give his very life, his body and his blood, for the salvation of God's people. And he promised that, whenever this meal is shared, his act of love, his sacrifice, will not only be remembered but it will be present to us and for us.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ is with us; reaching out to us in love once more. His once and for all sacrifice on Calvary is being poured out into our lives in this moment, for the forgiveness of all our sins; making each of us holy and bringing us God's healing and salvation.

Christ is present to us in a real and substantial way under the signs of bread and wine. Through the great prayer of thanksgiving, the Eucharistic Prayer, the bread and wine that we bring to the altar is transformed by God. Through consecration they are made sacred and holy. They become, as Jesus said himself, his Body and Blood. This is what we say Amen to when we receive Christ – The Body of Christ; the Blood of Christ.

The Four Actions of the Liturgy of the Eucharist

The shape of the Liturgy of the Eucharist follows closely the shape of the meal that Jesus had with his disciples at the Last Supper. It is very similar, also, to other meals that Jesus shared in his ministry on earth. For example, the feeding of the five thousand and the meal he shared with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (See Matthew 14:13-21 and Luke 24:28ff)

In all these meals we see a four-fold pattern that we can still recognise in our modern-day celebration of the Mass. These are the actions of **Taking – Blessing – Breaking – Sharing**. They each correspond to an element of the Liturgy of the Eucharist:

- + **Taking** The Preparation of the Altar and the Presentation of Gifts
- + **Blessing** The Eucharistic Prayer
- + **Breaking** The Lamb of God with its accompanying action (also known as the Fraction Rite)
- + **Sharing** The procession of the people with reception of Holy Communion



The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.

— Pope Francis —

THE SHAPE OF THE MASS

Introductory Rites

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Concluding Rites

Taking: The Preparation of the Altar and Presentation of the Gifts

We **sit** for this simple action of setting the table of the altar for the sacred meal we are about to share. The gifts of bread and wine are presented by members of the congregation on all our behalf. We are very much part of this action.

Ideally, enough bread is brought forward to facilitate as many people as possible to receive Hosts consecrated at this Mass.

After prayers have been said over the gifts, they, as well as the Cross, ministers and people, may be incensed, underscoring the sacredness of this action.

As we present these gifts, we know in faith that God will make them holy (consecrate) and transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Along with our gifts we are invited to present our very selves for God's blessing and transformation. We are invited to do this every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist!

Sunday as a day of Charity During this time in the Mass, we also present monetary gifts. This has its roots in the earliest times of Christianity. On one hand, the parish belongs to us and we are responsible for its upkeep. On the other hand, as Christians each of us is called to care for the needs of the poor; this is why our Trócaire and other charitable collections are so important.

Blessing: The Eucharistic Prayer

We come to the core and centre of our Sunday Mass. We **stand** for the opening of this prayer as 'we lift up our hearts to the Lord'. There are a number of Eucharistic Prayers (EP) that can be used at Mass; they all have common elements that are essential to any EP. All of them are addressed to God the Father.

Next time you are at Mass listen and see if you can recognise the following elements of the EP.

After an **Opening Dialogue** between priest and people, the priest leads us in the **Preface**. This text changes for each celebration. In it we remember the good things God has done for us and we give thanks and praise to God (*the meaning of 'Eucharist' is to give thanks*).

This is followed by a (sung) acclamation by the congregation and priest, the 'Holy, Holy' or **Sanctus**. Here we join our prayer with that of the saints and angels in heaven. Then we **kneel** as we enter deeper into the prayer.

In every sacrament, at some point, we **call upon** God to send down the **Holy Spirit**. In the EP we ask God to send the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine so that they will become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The words and actions of Jesus himself at the Last Supper are now repeated in the **Institution Narrative and Consecration**. These sacred words achieve what they promise and express. Jesus, and his sacrifice of love, is now present among us under the signs of bread and wine which are now his Body and Blood. This real and saving presence is what we are invited to receive in Holy Communion.

In response, we sing (or say) the **Memorial Acclamation** to Christ, recalling and confessing our belief in the central 'Mystery of our faith' – His death and resurrection.

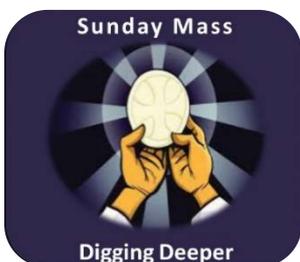
We continue to **recall** Jesus' passion, resurrection and ascension into heaven and we **offer** to God this 'once and for all' sacrifice of Christ. In doing so we also join ourselves and our lives to this offering to God.

The prayer goes on to pray a series of **intercessions**, deepening our bond with the saints, Mary, the local and the wider Church, as well as those gone before us. The EP concludes where it began, with a prayer of praise and glory to God, called the **Doxology**.

We, the assembly, respond with our **Amen**, endorsing not just the Doxology but also all that we have prayed in the whole of the EP – our Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Breaking and sharing:
Continued in 'Sunday Mass - Digging Deeper' Part Four

We Come together...



- digging deeper: an Invitation
- to meet the Lord
- to listen to God speaking to us
- to share in Christ's Body & Blood
- to be sent to bring Christ to the world
- as a diocesan family for the Chrism Mass
- to celebrate the Easter Triduum

(see kandle.ie for more resources)