

PRAYING MASS:

A Six Week Guide to Getting More out of Mass

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Night One: Foundations

Invite all to be seated and greet them.

Loving God,
who provide for all our needs,
grant that we who gather here to deepen our understanding of the liturgy
may be enlightened to understand what you have given us
through Christ Our Lord. Amen

Self-Introduction:

As there may be some visitors here, I would like to begin with an introduction. I am Fr. Alex Gaudet. I am a priest of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. I am a native of Thibodaux and a graduate of Thibodaux High. I attended ULL in Lafayette and Nichols State here in Thibodaux. I eventually graduated from college from St. Ben's in Covington and theology at Notre Dame in New Orleans for seminary. I am a son of the bayous and nothing in my experience of the seminary has convinced me otherwise. My family has deep roots in the Thibodaux area. I grew up at Christ the Redeemer church up the road and my dad's family grew up here at St. Genevieve. I was assigned to St. Bernadette as a deacon and to St. Francis de Sales as a priest. I had the pleasure of spending summers at St. Louis in Bayou Blue and St. Anthony in Bayou Black. I am an avid reader although I do not have

much time for that. I have had a lifelong love of learning particular for math, science, and most of all logic. I was interested in being a computer programmer before God made it clear that I was supposed to be one of his priests.

I am in many ways a graduated altar server. Some twenty years ago I was invited to be trained as an altar server at Christ the Redeemer. There I learned that I really enjoyed the complex and rich nature of the Mass. Only now do I hear from peers and parents alike what kind of little tyrant I was when I became confident as a server. Mass became a place where I could excel; a place where I knew more than my peers. That never really changed. As I matured I was fascinated by the signs and symbols of the different rituals, and the more complex the better. Anytime Mass was even a little bit different. I absolutely loved the Easter Vigil and Midnight Mass for Christmas. True, as a kid there was a certain strategic element to those two liturgies: eating candy all Easter morning without stopping for Mass or getting first crack at a gift on Christmas Eve. In the seminary, I had the privilege of experiencing forms and expressions of the Mass that I had never dreamed of because

they were not my experience from my home parish. The wonderfully complex and full liturgy of the Abbey Church. The heavenly music of the *schola cantorum*. The complete difference in the ways other people worship.

Likewise, I noticed that my love for the liturgy and my ability to engage it grew as my knowledge and familiarity with it grew. I got to see this thing I had done my whole life in a brand new light. Things that were always there seem to just from the pages. I hope to be able to give you all some of that experience. In my first few semesters of the seminary, I realized that, like me, most Catholics are sort of blocked off from most of Catholicism in general and the liturgy in particular. And if we are introduced to the liturgy it is often colored by some else's interpretation of what the liturgy should be. Further, we are intimately familiar with the liturgy as it is exercised in our home parishes, but we lack context with the wider Catholic world. Catholicism is a worldwide universal church, and her liturgy is as rich and diverse as her members. It is my desire that from this course we may all have a deeper understanding of the Mass that we celebrate weekly and even daily.

With the use of all of the tools available to us we will begin to examine the different parts of the Mass, the different signs and symbols and a few practical exercises to help us prepare for Sunday Mass.

Housekeeping:

Okay, before we go any farther, let's take care of some housekeeping details. For those of you who like to keep to schedules, we are not starting 15 minutes late. I intentionally planned to have 15 or so minutes of icebreaker/community time before we start class. So often we show up to these kinds of things running because we have to get there on time. We do the same thing with the Mass. It's easy for us to come to Mass for years setting next to the same people every Sunday without getting to know them even one bit. So let's try something different. However, I'm not really good at real icebreakers, and we're generally going to want to visit anyway. So rather than fight human nature, we'll have a few minutes to catch up with each other at the beginning of each evening. More so, when we gather for the next 5 nights, this will give us a chance to connect and talk about what we discovered in our experiences.

Then, we will have the evenings reflection where I talk for a long time. The reflection will be followed by some time for questions and then time for small group discussions and sharing. A word on questions. There is probably no topic more controversial among church people that liturgy. In the course of our studies we are more than likely going to step on some toes, contradict the liturgical practice of more than one parish, and touch upon things that many of us care very deeply about. I ask only one favor. If you have a question, please write it down on the hand out. I want to get to every single question at some point in our time together, but if we start to address questions and issues during the reflection we will never finish. My experience with this kind of teaching is that each question tends to lead to a better and deeper question which is exactly where we want to be. However, some of your questions may get answered in the course of the reflection. So, please write your question down. We are going to cover so much so fast that I would not trust my memory to retain a challenging nuance.

I envision that at least that we will have some time for us to break up into smaller groups to get to know each other better and to discuss

what we learned during the evening. I ask that once we are broken up evenly, you remain with that group if possible for the duration of the course. If we pick up any new participants, please welcome them to join your groups. I hope that we will have time for the groups to share what they have discussed. However, this is dependent on time as I want everyone to feel free to leave at 8:30 when we are set to end.

Second major housekeeping detail: What are we not intending to do in this series? I think it will be helpful for us to know the parameters of our discussion. Namely we are going to discuss practical ways for us to get more out of our Sunday worship. We will do this by looking at what the church says about preparing for and participating in the liturgy and by looking at the prayers and text of the Mass itself. This will not be a theological reflection on the Eucharist or a systematic explanation of the sacrament. While these are important, those kinds of material are more readily available. This will not be Fr. Alex's ideal of what the liturgy should look like. Although that is to a certain extent unavoidable as my desire is to act in accordance with the mind of the church in the

liturgy. We will be looking specifically at the current edition of the Latin Rite Roman Missal.

Third, if at the end of the evening you find this course helpful to you, consider who this might also be helpful for and consider inviting them to the rest of the nights.

History of Jewish Worship:

Now to get to the Mass specifically. Before we can dive into the Mass proper, we need to establish a foundation. The first foundation is to understand the history that leads up to the current iteration of the Mass. We could not even begin to say, we understand the Mass if we do not start with the Jewish roots of our most sacred rituals. In many ways Judaism is a religion of memory and ritual. Let's look to the first detailed recording of Jewish religious observance. We're all fairly familiar with the story. God comes to save the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. As part of the rescue, he prescribes an elaborate ritual for the people.

Go to quote on hand out.

A few things to point out from this story. Because the worship is of divine origin, God chooses how the people should worship him. The people have been living among pagans with the elaborate rituals for many years. This is the only way that they understand as appropriate for the worship of a deity. So, God in order to help them come to right worship seems to establish a replacement for the pagan worship the Hebrews have become accustomed to. This particular form of sacrificial meal is preserved in Jewish religious observance to today.

The second thing to note is that this ritual observance is to be held in perpetuity as a memorial. The yearly rotation of the season is accompanied by a rotation of religious memorials that recall the major turning points in Jewish history. The third is that these observances are semi-private. They are shared in a home but are open to others who might need to join in. God protects the small family from having to purchase an expensive animal for the sacrifice by joining to another family. The sacrifice starts in the Temple and ends in the home.

The Jewish religious observance at the time of Christ included several more feasts either established by the Law or called for because

of major events in the life of the people. The most famous of these is the Hanukkah celebration commemorating the events of the book of Maccabees.

At the time of Jesus, the worship of the whole Jewish world revolved around the Temple. Daily sacrifices were offered before the Holy of Holies in the Temple. In both the Temple and local synagogues, the people gathered on the Sabbath to hear from sacred scripture and to hear the teachings of the elders.

Transition into Christian Worship

The transition in to Christian worship was added by Jewish observance. In the Acts of the apostles we read:

See Text from Acts

In many ways, the apostles were not very different from us. When they were confronted with this new way of relating to God through Faith in Jesus Christ, they continued with what they knew. God had issued no new detailed commands like he had with the Passover. Jesus simply said to them do this in remembrance of me. So for a time they continued to go to the temple and to follow the Sabbath observance. They attended

the synagogue services. For a time, they would gather on Saturday, the day of religious observance in Judaism, and then they gathered again on the Sunday to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Over time the observance developed according to the problems they experienced. At one point, the decision was made to observe the Sabbath on Sunday in commemoration for the Lord's resurrection on Sunday.

At first they gathered with both a meal and the Lord's meal. St. Paul writes about how this caused some problems:

See Text from St. Paul

In the Corinthian community, the gathering for the Lord's supper had become a source of division rather than a sign of unity. St. Paul speaking for the whole church corrects the error. He tells them so practically: wait for each other, let the poor join, and do not let this become a source of division. At some point, the Christian community dropped the communal meal before the celebration of the Eucharist.

In his *1st Apology* Justin Martyr describes the experience of Christian liturgy in the 4th century. It sounds eerily familiar to our modern rites:

See text from Justin Martyr

Active Participation

Crash course complete. Now we must turn our gaze to more modern developments. Not long before the Second Vatican council, there was a liturgical movement among the people and the clergy that the liturgy should be more accessible. To condense a lot of history into a small statement. Many wanted to see that an understanding of the mass be restored. In the wake of the protestant reformation, the Council of Trent laid a foundation for resisting that led stagnation of the liturgy. The reformation demanded that the liturgy be celebrated in the ordinary and local language. Trent moved to preserve the ancient relationship between the Catholic Church and the Latin language long after most people could no longer understand it. The reformation demanded that the priest say Mass facing the people. Trent preserved the symbolism of saying Mass facing the east. The reformation demanded that the people receive both species of the Eucharist. Trent preserved that you could receive only one species by only distrusting the host. Nearly 500 years latter it was finally okay for Catholicism to address some of the issues

that had allowed for the Protestant reformation. Now keep in mind that the teachings of the Council of Trent were developed to preserve important theological doctrines not to limit freedoms. The pride of the reformation would not allow for negotiation.

Just before Vatican II there was a movement that was gaining momentum. This movement creatively dubbed “the Liturgical Movement” would pave the way for important changes in pastoral practice that would shape Vatican II and the modern Roman Rite. The liturgical movement was born out of emerging romanticism, a desire to deeply moved in our relationship with God. They got permission for the sung mass where the people were for the first time invited to sing the parts of the Mass. They got permission to read the readings in the vernacular language. Most of all they called for an active participation. You’ve truly accomplished something great when the Church uses your idea in her official teaching. From Vatican II’s document on the Liturgy:

See quote from SC

If you want a reason for us to gather here in a nut shell, it is this line. Access to the liturgy is not reserved for the elite. It is not reserved for priest and nuns. It is as the council says your “right and duty by reason of their baptism.” It is your birth right in the church to have a full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy. It is also your duty. We are taking care of both in this series.

There are not three categories but three descriptors to the same event. Our participating is to be full. We are fully engaged by the liturgy taking place. Before this teaching of the council and the renewal of the liturgy, most people would pray the rosary or other devotions while the priest quietly said Mass. This not entirely novel as we pretty much still do this today, but the pious practices of old have been replaced with cell phone and bulletins.

Our participation is to be conscious. This is slightly more challenge. It has to do with our understanding of what the signs and symbols mean especially as we relate to them. Namely when we say “amen” or “we pray to the Lord” do we really understand what we are doing or are we mealy repeating the words we’re conditioned to repeat.

We tend to be fairly aware that we're doing something wrong when we are not fully paying attention during the Mass. A good percentage of engaged Catholics complain of getting distracted during mass. I know this because I hear it so very often in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Finally, our participation is to be active. Now that Latin here is a little trick as the word *actuoso* has two meanings. It can mean active, but it can also mean actual. Putting the two together our participation in the liturgy is active as opposed to passive. Now this is a game changer. Not only are we invited to use our gifts at the service of the community and the worship of God through ministerial roles, but we are also called to participate in the sacrifice by joining all of our many prayers to the one voice of the church through the priest. Sure we need readers, commentators, altar servers, ushers, and communion ministers, but there is something much more important going on during the liturgy that we are invited to participate in. It is easy for the admittedly necessary ministries to distract us away from our right and obligation as the baptized.

While our whole time together is aimed at fostering better active participation, we will not have a great deal of time to focus on it itself. The heart of full, conscious, and active participation has to do with the theology of sacrifice in the Mass and the theological reality of synergy. While it is clear that the celebrant is making a sacrifice during the Mass, every person in attendance is invited to participate in that sacrifice in two ways. First, we bring our own worries and cares to the altar of the Lord during the Mass. Whether its job security to the conversion of a wayward child to healing for an ailing relative, we all have something that we need to come the lord for. The mass and its sacrifice are the place to off load those worries and concerns. Second we participate by offering assent to what is said and offered at this mass. Through responses and acclamations, we embody the living Church in the liturgy. Together with the priest, the liturgical worship of a given church becomes the living worship of all humanity.

Further our active participation has to do with synergy. Namely that two active energies or powers are at work in the liturgy. God's activity in turning the bread and wine in the body and blood of Jesus

Christ is met with our activity of praising and worshiping the Lord. God gives us the materials we need in the bread and wine. We offer them in the Mass. He returns them transformed. Finally, we fully receive the gift when we consume the Eucharist.

So we will develop our active participation skills during the rest of this series by analyzing the various prayers of the mass and the instructions from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. We will look at the meanings of the signs and symbols in the liturgy. Where it is helpful we will address differences between the rite established after Trent and the rite established after Vatican II. When we can we will see the biblical roots the elements of the Mass. Finally, we will end with some practical tips for engaging each part of the Mass.

Terms:

Refer to handout

Night two: Preparation

Opening Prayer:

Almighty and ever living God,
who in the abundance of your mercy
gave us access to your divine liturgy,
grant that we might more deeply
penetrate the mysteries of what you have given us.
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

3 Stages of Preparation:

In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II inaugurated a wholly new way of conceptualizing preparation for the sacrament of marriage. He explained that a person is prepared for marriage in three stages: remote preparation, proximate preparation, and liturgical preparation. Remote preparation entails all that the couple has experienced of marriage before they arrived before the priest. Proximate preparation is the intentional, guided, and focused preparation that we associate with marriage preparation. Liturgical preparation is the way in which the liturgy of marriage prepares us for the reality of living marriage life. JPII's wisdom was to recognize what the couples already brought to their

marriage preparation and how that should reasonable and profoundly affect their proximate preparation. I would like to borrow from JPPII's approach.

Remote Preparation:

As we've already talked about, most of us are native to the liturgy, especially the Mass. Namely we bring a large collection of experiences that impact how we prepare and experience each subsequent experience of the Mass. If we grew up going to the Mass every Sunday, the chances of us choosing to attend Mass on a given Sunday is much higher than the chance that an atheist will attend Mass on that same Sunday. Our experiences affect but do not dictate what our preparation and participation in Mass will look like. When I was a child we had two family customs that impacted my preparedness for Mass. Namely, we as a family fasted from an hour from before that time that Mass was going to start, and we watched the *Three Stooges* on TV. So, even until today, I feel personally awkward eating less than hour before Mass even though I know that what is demanded of us is to fast an hour before receiving the Eucharist. That is still very engrained in my preparation for Mass.

On the other hand, I can still find myself comfortable working or relaxing up until just before its time for Mass to start. Even though it is really important that I (A) be on time for Mass and (B) be prepared for Mass. What we do every Sunday has as much impact as what we do before every Sunday. So, we want to establish good habits that help us prepare for Mass every time.

Our proximate preparation has two parts. First, what we can do to enrich our experience at all Masses in general. Second, what we can do can do before each Mass in particular. In general, we can be better prepared for Mass through learning more about the Mass, spending time with the common texts that we will hear, and by having access to the readings. Right now we are participating in a remote preparation for Mass that will, hopefully help you to be prepared for Mass for the rest of your life, but this is not the only way to learn about the Mass. Useful books are the *Wellspring of Worship* by Jean Corbon, *Swear to God* by Scott Hahn, and *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Pope Benedict XVI. The library of material available on the Internet is baffling so long as we

recognize the usually possibility of false information, dramatic skews, and rampant opinion. Not to point to one source or another for continued information, but simply to say that if we want to be well prepared for the Mass we should be on the lookout for more information all the time.

Next we can spend more time with the text of the Mass. The hour of Mass is quite short and things happen at a pretty rapid pace. It can be easy to miss some of the important thing that we all say much less what the priest in particular is saying. So, why not spend some extra time become familiar with the words that we hear and say all of the time. I am surprised how much more focused and understanding I am when I have read over the text multiple times. For example, the rite of ordination is long but happens at a very fast pace. I pretty much always missed the prayer of ordination for the 5 years prior to my own ordination, but after I read through the ritual daily over several months, I was able to get so much more out of it. Now, we probably don't need

quite that much dedication, but how much more could we get from the prayers if we were familiar with them.

Finally, we can have access to the readings before Mass. In other words, have a plan for how you are going to get the readings into your life before Mass. You could arrive at church early and read them out of the missalette. You could look them up on the Internet. My suggestion is to purchase a hand Missal from the religious book store. This will give you access to some much. You will always have all of the readings and it will give you most of the text of the Mass as well. This serves as a fine transition point into what we can do each week to prepare for that week's Mass in particular.

Read the readings before Mass starts. If you can, read the readings and their context. There is a particular method and structure to the Sunday Mass readings that we will cover next week, but suffices to say that the readings are important. Depending on the time that you have available to you, you could read not only the particular readings, but also their context within their larger books. I really suggest that you do this

in advance so that on Sunday morning you can just quickly read over the readings and be refreshed.

Second, have something that you want to pray for. We all have something that we care about. The Mass gives us an opportunity to bring our cares and concerns to the Lord, but if we are not serious and prepared to bring a prayer, we can forget the things we want to pray for. Don't leave this prayer to chance. Instead, set aside some time each to seriously consider what you want to pray for in the Sunday Mass. This will help you to be more engaged in the ritual because you are more personally invested in the Mass.

Have a plan. We cannot expect our experience of the Mass to change all that much if we do not commit to making some kinds of changes in our own lives. The first step to real change is to have a plan of action. Generals who go out to battle without a plan tend to lose all of their troops. Likewise, those who go about to change their lives or doing anything of importance need a plan. What is your Sunday plan? It doesn't need to be ridge or perfect; it just needs to be a plan. If

something doesn't quite go right one Sunday don't worry about it. But if it continues to not work would reevaluate the plan. What Mass do I go to? When do I leave? How will I prepare? It sounds like a lot but the more you practice the plan the easier it will be to follow it. Last, the most important part of any plan is knowing when to deviate from the plan. You know why you are doing a particular thing as part of the plan; when it won't work change the plan.

Proximate Preparation:

Now let's turn our attention toward Sunday morning. Proximate preparations are those morning of things that we can do to more deeply prepare ourselves to receive the Mass. First, have a plan. This is more of a repeat, but if we want to get more out of Mass then we have to do things differently. Having a plan ensures that you do not waste your precious time and energy doing things that do not help you on Sunday morning. What should my plan include?

Incorporate silence and prayer into your morning. A lot of why we struggle to pay attention during the liturgy is that the liturgy is so different than our everyday lives. So, we have two options: change the

liturgy to match our lives or changes our lives to match the liturgy.

Adding silence into your Sunday morning, facilitates a deeper level of contemplation and perception that will allow us to better focus. Being silent is a posture of prayer and allows us to “hear” more of what God is doing. So, DO NOT watch television or listen to music that draws you away from Church. Do not try to get more work done within a few hours before Mass. You are simply going to continue doing the last thing you were doing until you naturally adjust. So, consciously choose to adjust.

Adjusting into silence is as simple as adding more prayer into your morning. Like having a plan adding more prayer is both remote and proximate. Adding a small prayer for attention and focus can help a lot toward our attention and focus. The Mass itself is essentially a really long prayer. If the experience of prayer namely talking to and being exposed to God is foreign to us, the Mass is going to remain difficult and strange to us. Again, we could change the Mass to fit us or we can change us to fit the Mass. Give yourself some time to focus in on the

things that you want, the things that you want for other people, and the things that you are grateful for. These will make the core of your prayer as well as remind you of the things that you want to pray for during the Mass itself. Prayer is also better facilitated by group participation. Namely a good way to prepare a number of people for Mass is by having a common prayer to share. Likewise, you could arrive at the Church earlier in order to be able to participate in the Rosary that is often said before each Mass.

Arrive at church early. I do not mean that you need to be at the church a full hour before Mass, but running into Mass at the last minute is not helping your participation. All things being equal, arriving 15 – 30 minutes before Mass starts will give you time to pray in the church, get comfortable, and get settled in. The purpose of arriving early is so that you can be more focused during the Mass as well as ensuring the proper number of ministers before the beginning of Mass. It is not so that you can visit with everyone around you. Not that talking with others before Mass is a bad thing, but that this is not helping you prepare

for Mass and is probably distracting to everyone not in your conversation. This should be reserved to the narthex or for the parking lot. I know that it is not easy for everyone to get to the church early especially those with small children. Those families are not who I am referring to. Take the time that you need to get your family up, happy, healthy and to church safe. But to everyone else get into the habit of being early.

Besides being able to focus and pray, arriving early gives you the opportunity to go to confession at many churches. The sacrament of confession is necessary for the reception of Communion for those who have committed a mortal sin. Sins that break the 10 commandments constitute a major break with God. The Eucharist on the other hand is the greatest sign of unity with God. One should not approach for the sacrament of the Eucharist without first preparing their heart either with an examination of Conscience or by means of the sacrament. This will give you time either for the sacrament or to prepare yourself for the next time that you might attend the sacrament. While you do not need to be

perfect to receive communion, we should still be willing to do our due diligence in preparing for the sacrament. Also, because you have arrived early at the church you should have plenty of time to complete the penance that father will give you. If you cannot go to confession but need to, the church permits you to make an act of contrition and go to confession at the next possible time. This is a small help but not a replacement for confession.

More common things that you might do include getting enough sleep during the night before so that you won't be tired during the services. We've all been to that early morning mass where even the organ is quite awake. To a certain extent this cannot be helped, but if you are going to an early Mass on a regular basis you should probably plan to go to sleep earlier so that you do not have to fight basic fatigue as well as distraction.

Find a spot in the church that is comfortable but not distracting. Do you find that it is too hard to hear? Pay attention to where the speakers are located in your church as well as the other sources of noise.

You may need to move around to get the feel of an actual church. If you're sitting directly in front of a fountain, you are probably going to struggle to hear and thus pay attention. Is the church always cold? Bring a jacket or move to a space not directly in the path of the church's cooling system. You should be able to adjust or retrieve your jacket because you arrived early right. Try not to sit where you can't see the altar or abo. While Mass is not so much about being able to see what's going on, not being able to see is that fastest way to give yourself permission to not pay attention and become distracted.

Be prepared for things not to go right. Things will happen: you have your perfect seat all figured out and some bonehead comes and takes it. You cannot control who sits around you, the weather, or father's accent, but you can change how it affects you. We already know that things will not always go perfectly, and that it is okay when they don't. We could try to live in the space of trying to control every little detail of participating in church, or we can do our best and react to what actually happens. Allowing our expectation of reality to meet our

experience of reality will allow us to put up with a lot of the stuff that tends to drive people crazy. The family in front of you can't keep still: how can I love them better? The people on side of you won't stop talking: how can I pray for them? Turn the inconvenience into an opportunity for grace, and you'll be able to deeply enter into the Mass no matter what happens.

Liturgical Preparation:

The introductory rites of the Mass have five parts: the procession, the greeting, the penitential act, the Gloria, and the collect. In the schema that we have been using, the whole liturgy serves as the liturgical preparation for the Mass. In addition, the introductory rites serve to also gently ease us into the heart of the liturgy. The procession serves as sort of an ice breaker. The penitential act helps us to recognize and address our unworthiness. While the Gloria and collect, opening prayer, help focus and guide our thoughts and prayers. These rites then hand us off into the proclamation of the Word of God.

Procession and Antiphon

From here on we will be stepping more deeply into the realm of the text of the Mass. We will alternate from using the text available to all through the missalette and other texts that have been provided via the handout. If you open your missalette to page 4 and locate the antiphon for Oct 9th. Mass begins with a procession. Whether simple, coming from the sacristy, or solemn, coming from the entrance of the church. The purpose of the procession is practical. We are still in the flesh and as such we need to get from one place to another by passing through intervening space. Father has to get to the altar. The procession is merely a ritualized version of the necessary moment. Located on page 4 you'll notice an entrance antiphon. Taken from sacred scripture, the antiphon serves as a default text for a cantor to sing for the procession. The opening music whether the proper antiphon or some other selected him serves to simply cover the movement of the ministers. It turns what would be a rather unceremonious moment of walking into an opportunity of praise. The entrance song tends to be something more common thus allowing more people to participate. Ideally we would sing something so well know that one could watch the procession and

sing without the need to look at a musical text. However, music does not necessarily need to be chosen only according to the ability of the congregation. Music of greater complexity such that it can only be sung by a dedicated choir is quite beautiful and serves to elevate the beauty and mystery of the Mass. We then participate through listening and appreciation. However, this may be better for other parts of the Mass. When the music is simple enough that it is clear meant for everyone to participate in, we should strive to participate.

The procession lines up as follows: Cross, candles closely, the other servers or acolytes, the reader, other priest, and the presider. There are three parts to the procession. The lead which consists of the cross and candles. They may be preceded by a Thruifer or master of ceremonies. The body which consists of the main group of ministers for the liturgy; they are arranged by liturgical or ecclesial significance: servers, deacons, priests and so on as is necessary. Finally, the presider who in the case of a bishop is followed by those to minister to his

special needs. Notice how the most important figure in the procession takes a place of prominence in the rear of the procession.

When the procession reaches the sanctuary, the set aside place where the altar, chair, and ambo reside, each or all together bow to the altar or genuflect, bend on one knee, the tabernacle if it is present. The bow is a sign of respect while the genuflection as an action of adoration. Each goes to his or her position while all stand. The priest venerates, kisses, the altar. This comes from a love of the altar as the symbol of Christ and his cross. The first Masses in the city of Rome were celebrated on the tombs of the martyrs. Thus began the custom, of creating a mini-tomb in the altar by having a relic, tiny fragment of bone, of a saint placed in the altar. The veneration of the altar also began as the veneration of those saints who went before us.

Greeting 6

After the procession has concluded, the priest turning towards the people greets them. Notice first, in the roman missal the priest is instructed to turn toward the people. Not to spend a ton of time on this, but ask yourself, why is the priest instructed to turn towards the people.

The current missal presumes that at least some of the time Mass might be even out of necessity celebrated in the posture of *ad orientem* and the priest needs to be instructed when to turn towards the people. This ancient posture for the celebration of the Mass is still used across the world. Its significance is that the whole congregation would celebrate the Mass facing either real or liturgical east: namely toward the rising sun a symbol of the resurrection. The *versus populem* posture is not without ancient significance but is more commonly used.

Now to the greeting itself. This greeting located on page 6 of the missalette is a real greeting. We are given several options taken from St. Paul. The reference our communion with the Father via the Son and the Spirit. There are three options. Often the unwritten one is used for simplicities sake. The bishop is given a separate greeting that comes from the words of Christ. This uniqueness calls to mind that the bishop has the fullness of the priesthood and is a modern apostle.

Posture

At several points during the Mass the missal instructs the priest and the congregation to take on several postures. We stand during the

procession and the priest extends his hand for the greeting. These different postures each connote something slightly different about what is happening. Standing is a posture of listening and attentiveness. Facing the people as opposed to facing the cross means that we as the gathered faithful are being addressed. Open hands in the greeting increase the significance of the address and beckons a response. Body language communicates so much. An exterior action with our body conversely impact our interior as well. When we are aware of what the posture is meant to produce we can go to that space more rapidly. Bowing the head at the name of Jesus, the Trinity, the name of Mary, or the patron of the day is a sign of veneration and prayer.

Penitential Act

After the greeting begins the penitential act. In general, the penitential act serves to help us recall our sinfulness and unworthiness and communicate God grace filled gift of mercy. It has two components. First, we are extolled to call to mind our sins and ask for God's mercy. This profound act of humility puts us all in a certain sense at the same level. From the reluctant teenager dragged to church, to the

person knee deep in an affair, to Pope Francis, we are all helpless sinners before God and in need of his mercy. Here is why you showed up to Mass early and took time to contemplate your sinfulness. Calling these things to mind are precisely why we come to Mass. This is one of the few places in the liturgy where we are clearly instructed to do something. If we want more out of the Mass, we would be wise to do what the liturgy instructs us to do. Call to mind your sins. How unfortunate it is when the liturgy is rushed at this point. How counter intuitive it becomes when there is no pause at the start of the penitential act. Second, the priest extends a minor absolution at the end of the penitential act. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Without diminishing the fact that Confession is necessary for the absolution of mortal sins, confession is not the only place where venial sins are forgiven. If we are in a state of grace, no mortal sins, this minor absolution grants forgiveness.

Now the penitential act has 4 possible forms. 1st is the Confiteor. Named after the first word of the prayer in Latin, a common practice in

the liturgy. The Confiteor expresses that our sin is communal and thus requires forgiveness from the community as well as from God. It further explains sin in that we do so in thought and deed in doing wrong and in not doing good. It reminds us that sin properly speaking comes through our own fault. If it really is a sin, then I chose to do it. Finally, it recognizes that we need assistance to even ask for forgiveness much less to not sin again. This prayer also serves as an act of contrition even for the sacrament of confession.

The 2nd form of the penitential act, as you see on page 6, is not used all that often. While rarely used out of convenience sake, it communicates much of the same content as the Confiteor.

The 3rd form of the penitential act is the Kyrie, from the Greek for Lord. The Kyrie can be sung in English or Greek according to the ability of the people or choir. It is sung or said antiphonally as a call and response as is the 2nd option but is significantly easier for everyone to participate in. As our translation shows, the Kyrie is all about asking God for mercy. Much in the same way as the Confiteor, we as a church

beg God to be merciful to us. When the Kyrie is done by itself, each line is preceded by Christological statement. There are *suggestions* in the missal, but the community is given permission to adapt this act to their needs. Out of convenience, most priest chose to use the provided suggestions.

When the 1 of the 1st 3 penitential acts is used the formula for simple absolution that we already talked about is said. If the 1st or 2nd option is chosen, the Kyrie without the tropes is then said or sung. The fourth option on page 8 is a sprinkling rite which is preferable to the Easter season. At its basis, blessed water is sprinkled on all gathered to recall the washing of Baptism. The water may be blessed at this point in the Mass or previously blessed water may be used. An antiphon or hymn is sung during the sprinkling. The act is concluded with a prayer.

The Gloria:

Possibly the bane of those who do not like to sing, the Gloria follows the penitential act. The Gloria is a joyful song of praise that serves as a sort of mini-creed at the beginning of the Mass. It calls to mind the great joy of the angels at Christ's birth as such it is not sung

during the penitential seasons of advent and lent. However, it is used as one of the ways in which special feasts are elevated. The Gloria is sung on the feasts of the life of Christ, Mary, Joseph, the Apostles, and church patrons even when they are celebrated during the week. The first sentence, which is sometimes used as an antiphon, comes from the joyful songs of the angels recounted in the infancy narrative found in the gospel according to Luke (2:14). Remainder of the text starts with a glorification of God as a transcendent and all powerful ruler. God does not compete with creation when he creates or rules but is totally other. He holds existence itself in suspension and provides the basic order of the universe. Then it professes Jesus to be the messiah, the Son of the Living God, and the sacrifice for human salvation. It concludes by completing Trinitarian formula.

The Collect:

The Gloria pivots into the opening prayer or Collect. The collect serves as more than just first prayer of the Mass. It invites all to collect their thought and direct them at to the Lord as a Church while giving us a specific spiritual point to focus on. The celebrant introduces the

collect with the invocation “Let us pray.” The invocation serves as both a preface to the prayer and directs us to gather and collect our prayers. Similar to the penitential act, a period of silence proceeds the prayer. Silence has two main purposes in the liturgy. Usually, silence allows us mental space to recollect and reflect on the previous event. However, the silence before the collect and during the penitential act allows for us to recall thoughts pertinent to the action taking place. The silence proceeding the collect allows us to recall those things that we want to pray for as well, our thankfulness towards, to rest in an awed wonder before the Lord, or some combination. The collect for each Sunday mass is proper to each Sunday but is not directly connected to the readings of that day.

The collect is then sung or said with the people responding “amen.” As with the “and with your spirit” from the greeting, the “amen” after the collect has a real, personal function. In the “amen,” the congregation ascends to what the Church has proposed as prayer. Thus, our “amen” should be a real and authentic amen. Which means we

should probably be paying attention to what is being said.

Understanding the structure of the collect will help us to better follow what each individual prayer means.

All prayers in the Mass and indeed the whole formal catholic tradition have the same form: Invocation, anamnesis, petition, doxology. In the invocation, we identify to whom we are addressing this prayer. Generally, in the Mass, the prayers are addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit which is reflected in the wording of the prayers. The anamnesis recalls something that God has done in history or creation. Here we make use of the Greek understanding of a remembrance that is also a participation. This remembering may also include a thanksgiving. The anamnesis leads into the petition. In general, we pray vocal prayers for a purpose if that purpose is only that what we have already said or done may be more deeply ingrained. The prayer concludes with a doxology which completes the address begun in the invocation. This form of prayer is deeply Jewish and ancient. Practically, it is the easiest way to generate longer, beautiful, more

formal sounding prayers. This is not necessarily the pattern for a private prayer but can be used as a model guide to prayer. Pay attention to the anamnesis and petition parts of the prayer so as to give real assent to what is described. Most collects conclude with a formula including the name of Jesus, thus you may bow your head in reverence. Turn your attention to the collect for Oct 2nd on page 13. The first line is the invocation. The 2nd to 4th lines are the anamnesis. The 5th to 8th lines are the petition. The last four lines are the doxology common to the Collect.

Night Three: The Liturgy of the Word

Good and loving God
grant that We might more fully understand
the mystery of your word
especially as it comes to us in the Liturgy.
Through Christ our Lord.

Tonight we are going to take a closer look at the Liturgy of the Word. This part of the Mass starts after the Collect with the first reading and concludes with the Universal Prayers leading into the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the word is the first of the two major portions of the Mass and with the Liturgy of the Eucharist makes up the majority of our time at each Mass. The Liturgy of the Word has 4 elements: the proclamation of the Word, the Homily, the Creed, and the Universal Prayer. As the name indicates the bulk of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of our reading of Sacred Scripture.

The Readings: The Lectionary

When speaking of the readings at Mass, we must first spend some time with the renewed technology of the Lectionary. Taken from the Latin word for reading *lectio*, the Lectionary is the four volume

collection from which the readings are either assigned or chosen. We are quite familiar with the Sunday lectionary and its companion, the Book of the Gospels. It is particularly easy for us to take the current lectionary for granted but it is actually a piece of liturgical technology hundreds of years in the making. On our first night, we saw how the first Christians continued the customs of their Jewish heritage especially when it came to the Sunday Liturgy. In Jewish synagogue services, there was some directed reading of Scripture along with an explanation from the Rabbis. The Christians replaced the teaching of the Rabbis with the reading of the Memoirs of the Apostles which Justin Martyr recounted. By the time of the protestant reformation, the Church was badly in need of a revision of the Liturgy. At this time, a monumental leap was taken as a lectionary was established for the world. It consisted of predetermined readings from the Gospels and from the New Testament. 500 hundred years later and the liturgy was again badly in need of a revision. When it comes to the readings from sacred scripture Vatican II requests: “The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table

of God's word. In this way a more representative portion of the holy scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years (SC 51).”

SC calls for a revised lectionary that will open up more of sacred scripture in the Mass. In the Lectionary associated with the Missal of Pius V, Some of the Gospels and Pauline letters were read. In the revisions, the council fathers with the blessing of Paul VI: all of the Gospels and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the new Testament will be read with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Old Testament being read. The Liturgy was transitioned from a 1 year lectionary with 2 two readings to a 3 year lectionary with 4 readings. A reading from the Old Testament and from the psalms were added to each Mass. Further, greater emphasis was placed on connecting the readings of the day with the Liturgical Calendar. The feast of saints who appear in sacred scripture would be accompanied with readings including the patron. The readings at the end of the liturgical year speak of the end times. While, Lent will bring a penitential tone.

Beginning with the *Missal of Paul VI* the readings of the Mass work together. They isolate a theme to present to us the faithful for absorption. The Sunday Mass readings are governed by two principles: semi-continuous reading and harmonization. The more covert of the two, the gospels are arranged so that more or less the whole Gospel of a particular author will be read over the series of weeks of Ordinary time. It is continuous because the readings follow in the author's progression from start to finish. It is semi-continuous because there are gaps. If you attend Mass every Sunday for a year you will have heard an entire Gospel start to finish. The second and more clear principle is that of harmonization. Namely the 1st reading and the psalm have a thematic connection with the Gospel. We hear in the Gospel about how the Son of Man must be lifted up like the Moses lifted up the snake in the desert; we are also given the passage from exodus where Moses lifts up the snake in the desert. More or less the connection between the 1st reading and the Gospel is easy to identify.

The 2nd reading on the other hand is a separate semi-continuous reading from St. Paul's letters or the other so called catholic epistles. The 2nd reading on most Sundays doesn't not have an intentional connection with the 1st reading or with the Gospel. However, sometimes there is unintended but still helpful overlap. There is a principle in Catholic Scripture study that every part of Scripture speaks to every other part.

As part of the new Lectionary, it was necessary that if more scripture was to be added more than more readings would need to be added. So the lectionary was arranged into two cycles. The Sunday cycle is a 3-year cycle with each year focusing on a different synoptic Gospel. Often weekends will be given themes, the reading of the multiplication of the Loaves and fishes is read each year, but the story is taken from that years Gospel. Matthew A; Mark B; Luke C. The Gospel of John is read alongside Marks shorter Gospel and in seasons other than ordinary time. The weekday lectionary has two parts: a 2-year cycle of semi-continuous readings for the 1st reading that can be

taken from the Old or New testament, and a 1-year cycle of Gospels.

These readings follow a similar pace as the Sunday lectionary but often have some overlap.

How do we get more out of the Mass? Understanding the ebb and flow of the lectionary's semi-continuous and harmonic readings will help us understand the flow of the whole liturgical year. Though it the Church herself gives us something to chew on each week. Even if you never understood another homily, spending time with the readings beforehand and reflecting on their harmonic element and understanding the deeper context within the continuous reading will help us get more out of the Liturgy. The modern lectionary is by far the most important technologic development within the modern Liturgy.

The Proclamation of the Word

Now understanding the why and how the readings were chosen, let's turn our attention how we engage the lectionary during the Mass itself. The principle way that sacred scripture is encounter in the liturgy is by way of proclamation. Namely it is read aloud. This was an ancient

common practice for all reading whether out of necessity from illiteracy or practice, reading aloud was the main route for reading. Imagine a time before people had thought to read quietly by sounding words within their own minds. The proclamation of the Word with the liturgy has an additional function. Namely this is the way that the good news is actually propagated. When we read the readings each Sunday, we are once again witnesses to the proclamation of the Gospel from the time of Jesus. As such each experience should be treated with the same level of reverence and respect. How might we get more out of the readings? Frame the readings as they really are, God speaking to you personally amid the church. We can lose touch with what the readings really are. They are the teachings and wisdom of God given to us as a gift. Really listen and pay attention to what is being said. If you have not been able to sit with the readings before mass, you might want to help yourself focus by repeating the words as they are said so as to force a little more attention.

Before each reading the reader will introduce the book being read from. This fills the practical necessity that we know which book the reading is coming from so that we might better understand its context. The first and second readings are concluded with “The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.” This call and response recognizes that the readings just read are inspired by God and are trustworthy. Our response recognizes these readings as a gift from the Lord worthy of our gratitude. This may be a difficult virtue to build in ourselves but we should strive to be truly thankful the scriptures. After the 1st reading follows the responsorial psalm. It is a hymn of thankful praise sung to the Father as a response to the prophecies contained in the 1st reading. It is often sung in an antiphon – verse setup where the community sings the antiphon while the choir sings the verses. At the basic level we participate in the responsorial psalm by singing the antiphon. At a deeper level we participate in the psalm by conjoining our affect to the lyrics of the song. Rejoice with your heart if the psalm is rejoicing or repent in sack cloth in ashes along with the psalmist. This deeper

engagement is not always possible but we should certainly make the most of it while it is there.

After the second reading follows the Gospel. The proclamation of the Gospel is a privileged and sacred moment. It is reserved to the deacon, if not to the priest, and out of need or pastoral concern another suitable reader (think the priest has lost his voice). It is preceded by the singing of the triumphant Alleluia. The Alleluia has two functions: first it reciprocates the triumphant joy of the faithful upon finding the messiah's tomb open but empty on Easter morning. This is why it is not sung during the Lenten season. Second, the proclamation of the Gospel often begins with a procession from the presider's chair to the ambo. The Alleluia provides accompaniment to this procession. Our desire should be to share in the Easter Joy and to await with anticipation the preaching of Salvation through the Gospel. The Gospel itself is shown special reverence by reserved books, the procession, special invocations and conclusions, and by our posture of standing. It is introduced with "The Lord be with you. And with your spirit." This introduction carries

much of the same meaning as the greeting at the beginning of mass. It is the most profound greeting as it recognizes God's presence among us and our response recognizes the presence of God in the minister who reads.

The Gospel continues with "A reading from the Holy Gospel according to ...; Glory to you, O Lord." The announcing of the reading is essentially as it is in the 1st and 2nd readings, but a response is expected from us. The Gospel may have been written by a human author but it was also inspired by a divine author. We here give glory to God for the gift of this text. Finally, the Gospel is concluded with "The Gospel of the Lord; Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ." This carries much of the same meaning as the greetings for the 1st and 2nd readings but is given a unique text because it is the Gospel.

Here we have the 1st of the silent prayers of the Mass. You may have notice father mumbling from time to time to himself during different parts of the Mass. While some priests will quietly pray for their congregation during the mass as an act of piety, the Liturgy itself

prescribes several silent prayers. Often these are prayers directed to God on behalf of the priest so that his own personal unworthiness will not influence the Liturgy. When there is a deacon present. The deacon comes to the presider and asks “Your blessing, Father.” The priest responds “May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may proclaim his Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This silent prayer recognizes that the deacon needs the help of the Lord even to attempt to proclaim his Gospel. It has a sense that what this particular deacon is about to do is simultaneously important (duh) and dangerous. Think of what happens in the New Testament to the first deacon. He’s martyred. The authentic proclamation of the Gospel is a dangerous task.

When there is no deacon, the priest prays for himself “Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel.” This prayer highlights a different danger in the proclamation of the Gospel. Not one of us is worthy in ourselves to proclaim this message; thus, we are in need of God cleansing power. There is a

certain real moral danger that comes with proclaiming the word of God, namely that of being a hypocrite. How do we preach a Gospel that we cannot measure up to: by the grace of God. Here may be a good point to pray for your priest or deacon. Aid their prayer. This is deeper level of participation. After the Gospel is concluded, the Homily begins.

The Homily:

The homily is the most flexible element of the Mass as such it is often the most abused and misunderstood element of the Mass. Prior to the revision of the Liturgy a sermon was delivered during the course of the liturgy. This sermon could be on any topic the preacher saw fit to preach upon; further, bishops would from time to time publish homilies that they expected their priests to read from the pulpit. Sacrosanctum Concilium has this to say “By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text, during the course of the liturgical year; the homily, therefore, is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself; in fact, at those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the people on

Sundays and feasts of obligation, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason SC 52).”

There are two primary developments in the Church’s instruction on liturgical preaching. First the homily is to be drawn from the sacred text. Second, the homily is part of the liturgy and thus should not be omitted on Sundays, feasts, or during the major Liturgical seasons. The church increases her expectation that a homily will be preached while focusing the material that it should be drawn from. The focus on the sacred text is met with an increase of material provided by the new lectionary. Most of what is to be said about the homily is directed at the one who writes homilies, but how can we get more out of Mass from the Homily.

The purpose of the homily is to spend a small but dedicated amount of time on particular sacred texts for the purpose of reflection. It is not a dedicated treatise on theological or social issues. While you may learn something during the homily, this is *lagniappe*. Instead let it challenge your existing relationship with God. So pay attention to what

the priest is saying. What is his main point? What is his argument? Try to find some take away that you can take action on.

A small word on feedback. As much as the great number of “great Mass father,” make me feel good. They are in essence a trap for the priest to begin to take pride in what he has accomplished. And don’t really provide a whole lot of helpful feedback. If something specific has helped you or was obscure you may wish to approach him about it in the following week. After mass, is the absolutely worst time to try to have a serious conversation with the priest celebrant. He is tired and trying to focus of multiple people all at the same time. Comments on pace, tone, volume and such are helpful but may not be able to immediately be handled.

The Creed:

On Sundays and major feast days the homily is followed by the Creed. The Creed is a complex and rich web of theological statements created for the purpose of articulating what Christians believe. At its essence being Christian is to give witness to the truths contained in the

Creed. We are given two options in the Liturgy for the Creed the primary option is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan was the joint anti-heretic statement of the first two church councils of Nicaea Constantinople. The second far less used option is the Apostle's Creed of ancient origin. Because of the complex nature of the Creed we cannot fully explain both fully in a reasonable amount of time. A full quarter of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is devoted to expanding on the Nicene Creed. In summary if you want to get more out of the Creed spend some time alone with it. Pray about what it contains trying to get yourself to the point where you understand what the various statements are referring to so that you might offer ascent to what they proclaim. Make your "I Believe" as authentic as possible.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed has four components: one for each person of the Trinity and a fourth component on the Church and our hopes. "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." Proclaims that God is a transcendent creator of the visible and invisible order. God does not rule like other rulers because he is almighty. It witnesses to the reality of an

invisible spiritual order. Something our scientific reduction would disagree with. Finally, we worship a God who can be describe as Father. For a father to be a father, he must have a son. The whole creed hinges on the teaching that our God is triune. In eternity, the Father generates His Son and together they spirate the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all equally God without the Son being the Father, the Father being the Spirit, or the Spirit being the Son. The is not mixture or blending. The complex issue of bring definition to the Trinity was the main victory won by the council of Nicaea. It helps us to understand and articulate how we remain monotheist but have a triune God. This is extremely important because the Son become incarnate and dies on the Cross. If he is not really God, then we labor in Christianity in vain.

The second part of the Creed deals with the divinity of the Son as well as his life, death, and resurrection. The focal point here is that the Son is truly God. It repeats this concept 5 times in as many lines. The key theological development in this part is “consubstantial.” The Son is

the one in being (same substance) as the father; thus, he is truly God.

But he comes down from heaven in the incarnation. He is really a man.

He dies and comes back to life. Finally, he is alive and seated at the right hand of His father in Heaven.

The third part of the Creed begins the addition of Constantinople. It concludes our understanding of the Trinity by stating that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is it. This “and” cause the spilt between the Church in the East and the West. In the west, there is an understanding the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. The conclusion: most of the world understands that the spirit proceeds from the Father though the son. The church remains divided but no longer over this issue.

The last part of the Creed explains the nature of the Church and her main promises and hopes. The Church is one therefore unified. The church is holy thus set apart for carrying out of God’s plan. The church is catholic; thus, universal. She is God’s one true abiding presences in the world through her members. All graces that human receive in this

life in some mysterious way come through the Church. The Church is apostolic; she is sent out to the nations and bears witness to the Gospel. We confess a baptism which forgives sins without which we do not know how people may be saved. We look forward to return to a new life of all who have died. This includes are return of our bodies. Which leads into a new life in heaven so much better than his life on earth.

The Universal Prayers:

Following the Creed, we join in praying the universal prayers or prayers of the faithful. The universal prayers are arranged with an introduction addressing our prayers to God the Father followed by several intentions, and concluded with a prayer. The purpose of the universal prayer is to join our prayers to the needs and concerns of the whole world. This prayer was restored after the revision of the Liturgy. Sacrosanctum Concilium says “Especially on Sundays and feasts of obligation there is to be restored, after the Gospel and the homily, ‘the common prayer’ or ‘the prayer of the faithful.’ By this prayer, in which the people are to take part, intercession will be made for holy Church,

for the civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the entire world (SC 53).” The church provides a basic format and several examples for the Universal prayer, but freedom is given to each church to modify or create new prayers to fit their needs. At the least, there should be prayers for the Church, the nation, the community, and the poor. Many parishes will include with a prayer that includes all of our special intentions. This is a time for you to call to mind that intention that you came to offer this mass for or the intention that you thought about before mass.

The prayers are arranged into a call and response form with the person reading the prayers proposing the thing for us to pray about and the congregation both offering assent to that prayer and offering prayer for that intention with “Lord hear our Prayer.” Two things of note: first, our response to the commentator is the actual universal prayer. We should be attentive here so that our response is authentic. 2nd notice that the response is singular rather than plural. Lord hear our Prayer. This is a small thing but it breaks the liturgical logic of what is actually being

communicated. Getting more out of the prayers of the faithful has two main components. The first is to be personally invested in the praying of the prayers. Make these prayers your own. Do not just offer another flaccid response. Second, bring something to pray about. This is the ultimate way to be invested in the Mass. If only your prayer is that you might focus better in the Mass and be closer to the LORD. When the Universal prayer is concluded the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins.

Night four: The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Opening Prayer:

This evening's focus is on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the portion of the Mass from after the general intercession until the post communion prayer. It is called the "Liturgy of the Eucharist" because this whole half of the Liturgy of the Mass revolves around the Eucharistic prayer and the distribution of the Eucharist. It has three major movements: The Presentation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the distribution of the Eucharist. We will continue with the method that we have followed thus far: first reading the text as it appears in the Missal, then reflecting on the meaning of the words, and finally reflecting on what we might do differently in each part of the Liturgy.

The Presentation of the Gifts:

The presentation of the gifts is a general term that encompasses, the arranging of vessels on the altar, the collection, the presenting of the gifts, their being placed on the altar, and the lavabo ritual. In general, the presentation of the gifts is a time to offer the gifts that we have

prepared before, to recall our intention for the mass, and to prepare our hearts for the Eucharist. Generally, the presentation of the gifts is accompanied by a song on Sundays. When the general intercessions have concluded, the ministers arrange vessels on the altar for the Mass. In this practical step the chalices, ciboria, and purificators are all arranged on the altar.

The Collection:

While the altar is being arranged a collection is passed. The GIRM says, "It is desirable that the faithful express their participation by making an offering, bringing forward bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist and perhaps other gifts to relieve the needs of the church and of the poor." In ancient days some of the people would have brought forth the actual bread and wine for the liturgy. This is still allowed but out of convenience most churches resort to purchasing premade hosts and wine from religious congregations. The monetary collection has a specific purpose: namely to provide for the expenses of the church and for the good of the poor. We have a moral obligation to support our church as well as to give alms to the poor. In this collection

we see a continuation of the apostolic communities recounted in the acts of the Apostles where they kept all things in common. When a brother or sister falls on hard times, it is expected that the Christian community would come forward to care for its own and for those forgotten by others. As a small piece of advice, the passing of the collection is probably not the proper time to start to write a check or decide how much should be donated. This should preferably be before Mass to allow adequate time for reflection and discernment rather than a split second decision.

Presentation of the Gifts:

When the gifts have arrived at the foot of the altar, the priest and his ministers receive the gifts offer a prayer or thanks to those who have brought them. The bread is brought to the priest who prays “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.” From this prayer we have a view of the liturgical concept of “synergy.” This bread is recognized as both a human work and a fruit of the earth thus a gift from God. God

gives the rain, sun, and the grain plant. Man applies heat and skill to the grain and together bread is produced. After the prayer, the priest places the paten on the altar. According to the GIRM, the principle action here is the placing of the gifts on the altar, so it is fine for the singing to continue. In fact, it is preferable for the singing to continue through to the hand washing or to end before the bread is placed on the altar.

The pitcher of wine is brought to the priest. He pours a little water into the wine and says, “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” The pour of water into wine is an ancient custom. Adding water to wine sweetens it by bringing the natural sugars out. This is a good example of how ordinary life becomes part of the liturgy. The prayer accompanying the action highlights that through Christ humility in his incarnation, birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, we are destined to participate in the divinity of Christ. We are divinized through the Eucharist on earth and are promised a fuller divinization in heaven. The priest then lifts the chalice and presents it with a similar prayer to the bread.

After the gifts are placed on the altar the priest says quietly, “With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.” One of the defining features of the Missal of Pius V was its use of penitential language. It called to mind the lowliness of humanity and the weakness of the minister. This language is no longer the central focus of the Mass prayers but is still present in the Mass because we have not stopped needing the help of God for worship.

Lavabo:

After the quite prayer, the celebrant turns towards his serves to have his hands washed saying, “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” The action of washing has a practical, historical purpose. In the ancient world before the use of coined currency became common, more practical gifts were brought forward. A farmer might bring a basket of eggs or vegetables. A wealthier family might give a goat or chicken. Now the priest has a very hygienic reason to wash his hands. Gifts are also incensed just before the washing providing another reason to wash the hands. Even though some

elements of the liturgy have practical roots, these are often spiritualized in the form of prayers. While we may not need to have our hands washed for sanitary reasons, the prayer is still useful and a good reminder. The priest is asking to be spiritually cleaned of sinfulness as much as his hands are free from real dirt. This text is to remind the priest and all of a constant need for conversion.

Prayer Over the Gifts:

After washing his hands, the priest invites the gathered faithful to begin the main body of the sacrificial prayers of the Mass. The priest invites us to prayer with “Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.” This invitation to prayer highlights that we as the gathered faithful have some key part to play in the Sacrifice of the Mass. In a mysterious way, we have a real and pivotal part in the sacrifice being offered. What part? Well let’s look at the response. “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his Holy Church.” In this response, we mirror the prayer of the celebrant. We also ask God to accept the sacrifice. Here we make explicit that this

is celebrated for the benefit of the whole church. At least with this particular call and response, our part in the mass is to assent to what the celebrant is doing and affirm it with our own prayers. Our assent should be both in word and in intention. So, we say the words and thus give assent, and our interior prayer and intention are aimed at doing what the Church does at this moment.

After the “Pray, brethren” and “May the Lord accept,” the priest says the prayer over the gifts. The previous invitation to prayer and its response introduce the whole Eucharist prayer. They serve as the same function as the “let us pray” before the Collect. The prayer over the gifts tends to focus on how the participation in the Eucharist will help those gathered here. [Today’s prayer says, “May these offerings we bring in honor of all the saints be pleasing to you, O Lord, and grant that, just as we believe the Saints to be already assured of immortality so we may experience their concern for our salvation. Through Christ our Lord.” This prayer calls to mind that our purpose is to bring honor to all of the saints. Then it asks that we would be assured their prayers in the same measure that are assured immortality.] This prayer may be more general

or more specific based on the level of solemnity give to the particular day.

The Preface:

After the prayer over the gifts the celebrant prays the preface. The preface is a joyous act of praise. The preface begins with a threefold call and response. “The Lord be with you...And with your spirit.” “Lift up your hearts...we lift them up to the Lord.” “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God...It is right and just.” At this point, we’re very familiar with the first part, but the second two are new. “Lift up you heart” can sound overly emotional and empty to our modern ears. In Jewish anthropology, the heart is the deepest part of the person. It is the foundation of the person and is the place where God dwells. To lift up one’s heart is to lift the most important part of oneself to look deeply at another more important person. If we say these words authentically, we are already doing what they tell us to do. At this point in the Liturgy, our whole being is focused on the worship of God.

The dialogue reminds us of the need to be thankful to God. St. Thomas places the action of gratitude under his discussion of justice.

Gratitude is not optional when someone has done something for you but is something owed to the one who works. The primary form of gratitude that is owed is the gratitude for life that is offered to God.

After the preface dialogue concludes, the celebrant continues with the body of the preface. The preface may be general or proper depending on the liturgical season. It is usually constructed of three paragraphs: the first flows from the dialogue and recalls the justness of praising God. The Second is a theological reflection which in proper prefaces is tied to the feast or readings. The third connects our current act of praise with the continues song of the heavenly liturgy. It is an invitation to song and praise of the living God. The church herself as existing in three modes. The “Church Militant” are those members of the Church who are living on earth and are at war with the forces of darkness, i.e. you, I, pope Francis. The “Church Suffering” are those who are in purgatory awaiting their purification. The “Church Triumphant” are those members of the Church who have undergone the test and are admitted to heaven. They participate in the unending heavenly liturgy and pray for the salvation of the living and the dead.

[In the preface for All Saints we hear, “It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.” Now this first paragraph is fairly common. It the importance and rightness of offering praise to our heavenly father.

The second paragraph says, “For today by your gift we celebrate the festival of your city, the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother, where the great array of our brothers and sisters already gives you eternal praise. Towards her, we eagerly hasten, as pilgrims advancing by faith, rejoicing in the glory bestowed upon those exalted members of the Church through whom you give us, in our frailty, both strength and good example.” The reflection of this preface is highly colored by the feast of All Saints. It calls to mind our relationship to the Heavenly Jerusalem. The Heavenly Jerusalem is a twofold image for the Church that we get from the book of Revelation and an image of heavenly immortality. It reminds us of the greatness of the gift of faith handed down to us in weak vessels. Although the saints were far from perfect, God was able

to use them and their work to hand down to us what was necessary for our salvation.

The third paragraph concludes, “And so, we glorify you with the multitude of Saints and Angels, as with one voice of praise we acclaim:” This conclusion will often have the same construction and serves to transition us from the preface to the sing of the Sanctus which ends the preface. It references our participation with the heavenly liturgy in praising the living God.]

In listening to the preface, there is a wealth of theological reflection at work in the middle paragraphs of the various prefaces. This is where the core of theological statements is usually found. These statements could form the core of your reflection. Unfortunately, the prefaces even of high feasts are rarely located in a missalette. For this you might have to look elsewhere to get the proper text of the mass.

Sanctus:

The end of the preface leads into the Sanctus. “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna

in the highest.” This text comes from two places. The first two lines are drawn from a vision of the heavenly liturgy found in Isaiah 6:3. These are the words of the angels as they worship God in Heaven. This is a reminder of the transcendence of God over all creation. The last three lines are the words Psalm 118 on the lips of the people of Jerusalem as Jesus enters the city on Holy Thursday found in Matthew 21 and Mark 11. These words connect the Earthly life and sacrifice of Jesus with the transcendent power of God.

The Communion Rite:

The mass then continues on with the Eucharistic Prayer. However, we are going to devote our entire time together next week to the Eucharistic Prayer. So for now we will skip to the communion rite [87].

The Our Father:

After the Eucharistic prayer is concluded the Our Father is introduced with “At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say.” This introduction shows that the following prayer is divinely inspired and given to us specifically by the Christ.

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Familiar though this prayer is, we are more accustomed to repeating in our various devotions than reflecting on it. Section 2 of part 4 of the CCC (2759) covers the Our Father in great detail. It is a brilliantly spun web of reflections from the Church fathers. The Our Father is composed of an address to the Father and 7 petitions.

First, we ask the Father to hallow his name. The name of God is always holy, but this petition asks for God to make himself known to the world through the hallowing of his name. Second, we request the coming of God’s kingdom. This recalls the ancient prayers of the Jewish people for the coming of the messiah. In the Christian context, this has a dual meaning in wanting the realization of God’s kingdom in our world and the second coming of the messiah. Third, we request that the following of his will on earth be commensurate with its following in heaven. This dual requests wants both that the will of God be actualized

on Earth and that his activities on earth be reflected in heavenly rewards. Fourth, we ask for daily bread. This request is threefold: that we would receive physical food, to receive the Eucharist, and to receive the grace needed for the day. This is also a daily request calling to mind the daily quality of the manna in the desert that had to be collected anew each day dissolved at the end of the day. Fifth, we ask for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus linked the forgiveness of sins with our capacity to forgive the sins of others. Otherwise, we might grow selfish asking for our sins to be forgiven while still holding grudges against our comrades. Sixth, we ask not to be put to the test. Our English translation of the Lord's Prayer is slightly troublesome. We have all memorized this prayer as asking to not be led into temptation. But God does not lead anyone into temptation. Both in the Greek and Latin and indeed many other languages, this petition is about not being led to the test. Jesus prayed that the apostles would not be led to the test in a similar way. If we understand our current translation in this way, it is an accurate translation. Seventh, we ask to be delivered from evil. We ask to not be

left to the hands of the enemy of humanity. The core of these prayers the Catechism says encompasses all of the things that we might pray for.

The Our Father is followed with the embolism, “Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” This prayer recalls the last two petitions of the Our Father and adds a request for mercy and peace. It connects the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer with our salvation and the coming of the Christ. The Doxology “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever” which concludes the praying of the Our Father.

When it comes to praying the Our Father, there is an almost scandalous amount of controversy. Should we or should we not hold hands during the Our Father? The purpose of the Our Father is to expression our community as a Church and our communion with God as our adoptive, heavenly father. Getting more out of the Our Father is as simple as knowing what we are praying about and not getting distracted. The Missal does not prescribe a posture for the gathered faithful. My

goal hear as with many things is not to tell you what to think or do in regard to this controversy, but to equip you with the kinds of knowledge to decide for yourself and to reasonably defend your decision. There is much opinion and little instruction in regard to this question. The holding of hands as we now experience is a relatively new and spontaneous activity. Prior to this development, most prayed with the folded hands posture. However, it is important to understand what we are doing during the Our Father. We are the Church at prayer. Without causing visible disunity, we should take on a posture of prayer. The ancient posture of praying with hands open is a posture of prayer. Folded hands is an equally ancient custom. The holding of hands is a posture of prayer associated with American protestant family prayers, and thus has a part in our culture. However, the kinds of wild contortions necessary to link everyone in the nave or the shuffling of people at the start of the Our Father is distracting and unnecessary. The gathering of people around the altar for the praying of the Our Father was stopped by the American bishops. There are good reasons to accept

any one of the three postures, but no reason so strong as to impose a particular posture on one person.

The Sign of Peace:

After the saying of the Our Father comes the Sign of Peace. “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.” This prayer uses the words of Christ to recall his promise of His peace to his apostles. This peace is not the kind of tenuous lack of war that the world understands as peace. It is a deep and abiding lack of a desire for violence and safety in God. “The peace of the Lord be with you always ... And with your spirit.” This is a representation of the giving of peace from Christ to his apostles.

The giving of peace among the people is commonly done but actually optional. It is given with “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.” This action is generally given by way of a hand shake or hug in American practice. This is no mere sign of human affection but is the abiding peace of God. Therefore,

it should be done with reference and respect. It is not necessary to try to give this sign each person to the other as the priest has already communicated peace to each person already. It is enough to give the sign to those within arm's reach. In other countries this sign is given by grasping forearms or by mutually placing your hands on the shoulders of the other person.

The Co-Mingling

The communion rite continues on with the co-mingling. The priest takes a host, breaks it and places a small piece in the chalice. He says “May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.” This ritual action is a physical paying out of a principle of Eucharistic Theology. Concomitance, is the idea that the whole body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ is in either species of the Eucharist. This is represented by both parts being mixed together. This is a symbolic presentation of what happens at the resurrection. Jesus’ body and blood that had become separate are now one again in a new life-giving reality.

Lamb of God:

As the co-mingling takes place the community begins to sing the Lamb of God. “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.”

This chant repeats the theme of asking for mercy through Christ the Lamb but connects it with Jesus act of forgiveness. Of note, this chant may be repeated many times ending on the last time with the “grant us peace.” This is infrequent but does come up.

Silent Prayers:

After the comingling, “priest prays one of two silent prayers. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, through your Death gave life to the world, free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood, from all my sins and from every evil; keep me always faithful to your commandments, and never let me be parted from you. Or: May the receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in

mind and body and a healing remedy.” Both prayers have similar themes in that the priest is recognizing his unworthiness which results in a certain danger in taking the Body and Blood of Christ. They highlight the two main powers of the Eucharist. It frees us from sin and strengthens us against further temptation. The Eucharist in many ways is God’s vaccine for sin.

Presenting the Eucharist:

After the Lamb of God is concluded, the priest genuflects and presents both species 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.” This action and prayer is a proclamation of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and a participation in the original revelation of the resurrection. It connects this act of receiving the Eucharist with the promised wedding supper of the lamb in the Gospels.

We respond with “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” In this response we take the words of the Centurion to Christ and make

them our own. These words accept that we are at the same time willfully sinful and deeply in need of assistance.

The Distribution of Communion:

The distribution of communion begins when the priest takes a host and says “May the Body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life” and consumes the host. Then he takes the chalice, says “May the Blood of Christ keep me safe for eternal life,” and drinks a little from the chalice. These prayers call to mind the Eucharist as the bread of eternal life. The Eucharist is so to speak a medicine that grants eternal life to those who knowingly and reverently receive it.

Communion is then distributed to all who present themselves for communion. As with the saying of the Our Father, The Receiving of Communion has a terrible amount of controversy. The Conference of Catholic Bishops of the US has permission to allow communion on the hand. This is allowed but is not always prudent. It would be wise if you need your hands to walk or hold something to receive communion on the tongue. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are also allowed by the Holy See because of need. These men and women perform a

need and worthy task each Sunday. You may not wish to receive from them, but they do nothing wrong. The Conference of Catholic bishops also has permission to distribute communion under both kinds year round. It is a fuller sign and beautiful practice to receive the precious blood, but it is by no means necessary.

As to the receiving of communion, my biggest instruction is to aid the person distributing communion to you and your family. Place your hands flat on top of each other, or open your mouth widely. Grasp the chalice firmly but without jerking it. The Eucharist is precious and distributing it is a difficult ministry. Do your minister a favor and help them help you.

The receiving of the Eucharist is a high point in the Mass. Use the time of procession to prepare yourself to receive our Lord. An interior quietude or participating in the reflection of the song all help. Avoid the temptation to look around at the other people gathered in the church or the art in the church itself. This moment is for you and Jesus. As you return to your seat, thank Jesus for the gift of the Eucharist then you may continue with the song.

Purification:

After the Eucharist has been distributed the priest purifies the vessels, saying, “What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity.” This action is practical as we wish to remove the remaining participle of the precious body and blood of our Lord from the vessels as well as cleaning the vessels. The prayer connects this action of receiving the Eucharist with the coming eternal life for the faithful.

The Prayer after Communion:

It should go without saying that after receiving the Eucharist the Mass is not over. The liturgy continues on with concluding rites. Before the concluding rites the Communion Rite is concluded with a prayer. This prayer often asks that the Eucharist we have just received will bear fruit in the future. The post Communion prayer for All Saints says, “As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy and wonderful in all your Saints, we implore your grace, so that, coming to perfect holiness in the fullness of your love, we may pass from this pilgrim table to the

banquet of our heavenly homeland. Through Christ our Lord.” This prayer recalls the purpose of the celebration in connecting our participation in the Eucharist as pilgrims with the promise of eternal life in our heavenly homeland.

After the Post Communion prayer follows the Concluding Rites which we will cover in our last meeting.

Night Five: The Eucharistic Prayer

Opening Prayer:

Loving God,
Who in the abundance of your love
give us the honor of worshiping you,
grant that through this reflection
we may come to enjoy your friendship.
Through Christ our Lord.

Last week we took up as our focus, the liturgy of the Eucharist with a rather gaping hole in the middle. Tonight, we will make the Eucharistic prayers the focus of our attention. Nestled between the singing of the “Holy, Holy” and the “Our Father.” The Eucharistic prayer makes up the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Tonight we will look at the common structural elements of the prayers. Then we’ll look at two prayers very closely, and we’ll conclude by looking at the highlights of the remaining prayers.

Common Structural Elements:

If you have taken a walk through your missalette or Sunday Missal, the first thing that might stand out to you about the Eucharistic prayers are their number. Beginning on page [77] our missalette gives us access to 6 unique Eucharistic prayers. The full missal contains 11 possible

options for the Eucharistic prayers. Out of convenience, most priest will settle on prayers 2 and 3 for Mass. As such, we will focus on those 2 prayers. There are the 4 main prayers, 2 prayers for reconciliation which are used in the Lenten season, 4 prayers for various need, and one prayer for Masses with a large number of children. Each prayer follows a similar format but the construction and focus of the prayers differ greatly and provide a robust number of options.

Each prayer follows a basic pattern: several petitions, an epiclesis or calling down of the Holy Spirit, the Institution Narrative, the mystery of faith, a second set of petitions, and concludes with a doxology. While each prayer contains two sets of petitions the number and arrangement differ from prayer to prayer. We will clearer examples as we go prayer by prayer through the prayers. After the first set of petitions, there is the epiclesis or calling down of the holy spirit. The wording of each prayer is different, but there is a common action where the priest lays his hands on top of the gifts. Symbolized by holding his hands flat over the gifts, the celebrant calls down of the Holy Spirit on the gifts. This ancient

action is a common symbol for the invocation of the Spirit and for prayer. It appears in several sacraments: ordination, confirmation, anointing, and reconciliation.

After the epiclesis, he comes the Institution Narrative. It is called the institution narrative because in it the words of Jesus Christ at the Last supper are repeated. All of the Eucharistic prayers have an institution narrative. Here is the heart of the anamnesis of the Mass where the Last Supper is both remembered and participated in. These words are the same throughout all of the Eucharistic prayers and constitute the form of the Sacrament. Each sacrament has certain words that accompany symbolic actions that constitute the sacrament itself. For the Eucharist, the words of consecration within the Institution Narrative are the words by which the sacrament is initiated. These words do what they say. In the Missal we read:

He bows slightly.

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.”**

He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration.

If you are familiar with the Gospels, you will notice that these precise words do not appear in Sacred Scripture. Instead the words of consecration are woven from all 4 accounts of the last supper. This phrase highlights that Jesus' Sacrifice is a free gift. His flesh is true nourishment.

He bows slightly.

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.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.”

**He shows the chalice to the people, places it on the corporal,
and genuflects in adoration.**

After, both parts of the Narrative, the celebrant is invited to genuflect in adoration of Jesus present in the Eucharist. Those standing in the Church are invited to bow. This phrase highlights that the Eucharist is a new covenant given to all. This is thus the fulfillment of the Covenant with Abraham which was always meant to include the whole human race.

After the institution narrative, the community sings the Mystery of faith.

We read in the Missal:

Then he says:

The mystery of faith.

And the people continue, acclaiming: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again. **Or:** When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again. **Or:** Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

This acclamation recapitulates all that was just experienced in the Eucharistic narrative. In it the whole paschal mystery is restated. After the mystery of faith follows the second set of petitions. These petitions have similar themes: for those gathered here, for the faithful, for the bishop the church the clergy, the world, for the faithful departed

The Eucharistic prayers conclude with a Doxology. We hear in the

Missal:

He takes the chalice and the paten with the host and, raising both, he says:

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

The people acclaim: Amen.

The doxology reflects the praises uttered in the preface. It and the whole Eucharistic prayer is ratified by our acclamation of Amen. Thus really sing it.

Before we go on toward the paragraph by paragraph look at the prayers, I would like to stop briefly on what practical things we might do during the Mass in order to get more out of the Eucharistic Prayers. While I do not advocate reading the prayers along with the presider as an ordinary course of action, it might be helpful for a while to follow along in your missalette. Once you've got a grasp of the flow and meaning of the prayers it is much more helpful to pay attention to their meaning. Focus on what is being said. Try to reduce your inner distraction or dialogue and focus on assenting to what is being prayed. There are places where the prayer turns itself towards praying for others. We all know people who could use some help; certainly we know some who have died. We should turn our prayers to these people where the Prayers instruct. During the elevations which follow either half of the institution narrative, we

could take advantage of this opportunity for adoration. Jesus is really present in the consecrated host, adore him. At the elevations, there is an ancient practice of saying, “my Lord and my God.” This can also help your focus. Finally, avoid unnecessary distractions even those that may seem holy. You may be distracted by the kid in front of you. There is nothing that you can do about that. But you certainly shouldn’t be praying the rosary.

Eucharistic Prayer II

Now let us turn our attention toward the second Eucharistic prayer. In the Missal we read: **The Priest, with hands extended, says:** You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Eucharist Prayer II doesn’t open with a petition so much as a declaration. All that is good and holy comes from the Lord. It continues with the epiclesis saying:

He joins his hands and, holding them extended over the offerings, says:

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,

He joins his hands and makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and the chalice together, saying:

so that they may become for us the Body and **X** Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He joins his hands.

The epiclesis talks the Spirit descending like the dewfall. This is an explicit connection between the Eucharist and the manna in the desert which appeared when the dew dried up in the morning. Also, there was a belief among the ancient Jews that the resurrection of the body would happen like the dewfall. Further the purpose of this prayer is to have the Lord exchange this ordinary bread with the unique bread of his Body.

After the epiclesis comes the institution narrative. We read:

In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as the nature of these words requires.

At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion,

He takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:

he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

First, the death and torture of Jesus was willingly accepted by the messiah as a free gift. Second, here he shows his mode of operation. He takes, blesses, breaks, and gives the bread. In profound way, the whole Christian life can be expressed as being taken, blessed, broken, and

given. After follows the words of consecration over the host. Then comes the institution ritual with the chalice. We hear:

After this, he continues:

In a similar way, when supper was ended,

He takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:

he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying:

The words of consecration are said over the wine. The mystery of faith follows. After the mystery of faith comes the petitions for Eucharistic Prayer II. We read:

Then the Priest, with hands extended, says:

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.

Notice that this is a memorial. Here we explicitly see that language of memory. We keep the reality of the life death and resurrection of our savior always before our eyes. Then notice that the God's gift of the Eucharist we have just received from God is offered back to God. This is our participation of the offering of Christ. We offer God's greatest gift back to him. Further, in this prayer we offer much needed thanks to

God that he has allowed us to witness this much of heaven without detriment. Remember what happened to the young man who touched the ark of the Covenant and burst into flames. As we continue, we read: “Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.”

This is a prayer for unity in the church. While the church has the mark or quality of being one, this is always imperfectly expressed in her members. Our prayer here is both for the simple growth of the Church as well as a more perfect expression of her interior unity. Next, we read: “Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with **N.** our Pope and **N.** our Bishop and all the clergy.”

In this petition we pray for the whole church and her leadership. “The fullness of Charity” seems to have two meanings. One, that she has the kind of fullness or completeness that only charity can bring which has to do with the number of her members. Or two, to have a fuller expression of charity among her members which has to do with the quality of

Christian's. What is clear is the need for the second part of this sentence. The clergy and all of the visible element of the church hierarchy are broken vessels in need of much prayer. One priest is over worked while another is lazy and a great many are somehow doing both. Pray for the bishop and your priests. There is an optional prayer that is most commonly used in funerals but can really be used in any Mass. We read:

“In Masses for the Dead, the following may be added:
Remember your servant **N.**, whom you have called (today) from this world to yourself. Grant that he (she) who was united with your Son in a death like his, may also be one with him in his Resurrection.”

This prayer is for a particular member of the faithful departed and requests that he or she rise with Christ on the Last day. Notice that the resurrection of the body is already promised to all. We are asking God to ratify what he has already promised. Last we hear:

Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face. Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with Blessed Joseph her spouse, with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you

throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you.

He joins his hands. through your Son, Jesus Christ.

This last prayer is for the intercession of all the saints and for all the faithful departed. It begins with the prayer for all of the Christians who have gone before us. For God, “remember” is synonymous with renewing the covenant. Then the prayer shifts to the whole church, begging the intercession of Mary, Joseph, and all that Saints that we might be worth of a resurrection to life. Merit is the reward that God gives when we respond to his grace. All good deeds done by those in a state of grace are rewarded in heaven.

Eucharistic prayer II is the shortest and simplest of all of the Eucharistic prayers. It is also one of the oldest arising from some of the most ancient Christian texts. The missal suggests its use on weekdays.

However, for some priests, it is simply to go to for every mass. For more elevated celebrations we turn to Eucharistic Prayer III.

Eucharistic Prayer III:

Eucharistic Prayer III begins with:

The Priest, with hands extended, says: You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise, for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy, and you never cease to gather a people to yourself, so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.

As with Eucharistic Prayer II, number 3 opens with a reminder of the things that God has done in the past. God is the creator of all and, through his Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit, has renewed the whole earth with new life. The “from the rising of the sun to its setting” brings to mind the presence of Christianity and particularly Catholicism’s presence on and care for the whole world. In a certain sense, the sun never sets on the sacraments. The Epiiclesis follows:

He joins his hands and, holding them extended over the offerings, says: Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, **He joins his hands and makes the Sign of the Cross once over the bread and chalice together, saying:** that they may become the Body and X Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, **He joins his hands.** at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

Again, this recalls the marvelous exchange of mundane bread and wine for the Body and Blood of Christ. The sacrifice is made in and through

the activity of Christ. He dies on the Cross, He institutes the sacrifice, and he commands us to repeat it. Then follows the institution narrative:

In the formulas that follow, the words of the Lord should be pronounced clearly and distinctly, as the nature of these words requires. For on the night he was betrayed **He takes the bread and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:** he himself took bread, and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying: ... **After this, he continues:** In a similar way, when supper was ended, **He takes the chalice and, holding it slightly raised above the altar, continues:** he took the chalice, and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

We see here many of the same themes as Eucharistic Prayer II. The prayer continues with the mystery of faith. Then we arrive at the second set of prayers. We read:

Then the Priest, with hands extended, says: Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

In this prayer we again see the theme that this celebration is a memorial of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. This prayer adds the Ascension into the mix of moments remembered in the Mass. The

Ascension is the pivotal last action of Christ on Earth. We understand his return to heaven in the Ascension as a necessary element to proceed the sending of the Holy Spirit. We see our hope for the return of Jesus which signals the end of time. Finally, here we have the return offering of the Eucharist to the Father as a thanksgiving. This word thanksgiving gives the sacrament its name. Eucharist in Greek. The prayer continues:

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

This is the prayer for unity in the church. As it often is with these prayers, the logic of the prayer is disrupted by theologically rich phrases. If we take out all of the descriptive phrases, we are asking that the we become one in Christ. But the request is augmented by an anamnesis of Christ willingness to die for our sins, and “we” is explained as those who are nourished with the Eucharist and filled with the Spirit. The modifying phrases are often where the deep theology is located. The prayer continues:

“May he make of us an eternal offering to you, so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect, especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with Blessed Joseph her spouse, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs (with Saint N.: the Saint of the day or Patron Saint) and with all the Saints, on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely for unfailing help.”

Here our request is that we the gathered people become an offering to God in order to obtain eternal life in heaven. In this prayer we are given the opportunity to include in addition to Mary, Joseph and all the saints in general, our church’s particular patron saint or the saint of the day.

These kinds of flexible prayers add to the complexity and flexibility of the Liturgy. The prayer continues:

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world. Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth, with your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, the Order of Bishops, all the clergy, and the entire people you have gained for your own.

This prayer emphasizes that this sacrifice is reconciliatory. There was something broken with our relationship with God and that brokenness has been restored. Further, it uses the language of a pilgrim journey.

This ancient expression conveys that our original home land is heaven

not earth. We were not made for the vale of tears but for paradise.

Thus, we pass through earth as St. Paul says as pilgrims. This is the petition praying for the whole church and all her members. Then follows: Listen graciously to the prayers of this family, whom you have summoned before you: in your compassion, O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.

This prayer asks for the collection of all the faithful in to the church. It uses familial language to express the relationship that exists between God and his adopt children on earth. It also points out that our gathering does not start in our volition but that we are summoned before God.

Eucharistic Prayer III ends with one of two prayers. The first says:

To our departed brothers and sisters and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your kingdom. There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory
He joins his hands. through Christ our Lord, through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.

This prayer is the more general end to Eucharist Prayer III. It is the prayer for all of the faithful departed. In this prayer, the language of “brothers and sister” is meant to connote fellow Christians. In other

prayers we hear a distinction between the brothers and sisters and all who might come to know God. This particular prayer is praying for the gift of heave to our fallen brethren.

In funerals or other Mass where the priest wants to pray for a specific fallen person he would instead say:

“When this Eucharistic Prayer is used in Masses for the Dead, the following may be said: Remember your servant **N.** whom you have called (today) from this world to yourself. Grant that he (she) who was united with your Son in a death like his, may also be one with him in his Resurrection, when from the earth he will raise up in the flesh those who have died, and transform our lowly body after the pattern of his own glorious body. To our departed brothers and sisters, too, and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your kingdom. There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory, when you will wipe away every tear from our eyes. For seeing you, our God, as you are, we shall be like you for all the ages and praise you without end,

He joins his hands. through Christ our Lord, through whom you bestow on the world all that is good. †

This prayer replaces the ordinary ending to the 3rd Eucharistic prayer. It draws the same connection that St. Paul makes between the death of the baptized and the resurrection. If we have been baptized into Christ we will also rise with Christ. Further, in the resurrection our lowly earthly

bodies will be made like Christ's glorified body in the post resurrection accounts we see in the Gospels. It then incorporates some of the elements from the default prayer. Finally, it concludes with the idea of heaven as the vision of God. All of the major theologians refer to heaven as the beatific or blessed vision. It is the vision of God, whatever that looks like that makes one immortal and thus like God. Heaven is to see God as He is and to be fully transformed by that vision. This prayer uses language and an arrangement of prayers that is higher than the second prayer but not as exalted as the first prayer. It is preferable to use on higher celebrations especially in Mass where the feast or memorial of a particular saint is celebrated. It also has language that helps facilitate celebrations where the Eucharistic is a major theme in the readings or prayers.

Highlights from the Remaining Eucharistic Prayers:

Coming to the end of our discussion of the Eucharistic prayers, I would like to bring up some of the highlights of the other prayers.

Eucharistic Prayer I is also known as the Roman Canon, canon being an ancient word for list. This is the list of roman prayers associated with

the Eucharist. This canon is closely associated with the Missal of Pious V. In the old rite, there was only one Eucharistic Prayer. One of the main requests of the liturgical reform was to give more options to priests when it came to selecting prayers for Mass. It is the longest among the prayers and uses the most exalted language.

Eucharistic Prayer IV is fairly different from the other 3 main prayers. It is inspired by the prayers found in the eastern catholic Church. It has a fixed preface that contains elements of the prayer. It uses a more theologically robust set of prayers that have fewer scriptural references. This prayer is not used often because it generally can only be used on weekdays during ordinary Time.

The remaining prayers are the prayers for Reconciliation, for various needs, and for mass with a large number of children. The Prayers for reconciliation are used generally throughout the season of Lent. They contain a larger number of prayers focusing on the call to repentance. While the theme of the Mass is always the pascal mystery, these prayers highlight the Christian moral life, the need to change, and the gift God

has given us in repentance. The prayers for various need are used in conjunction with the Masses for various needs. The Masses for various needs is a large collection of Collects, prayers over the gifts, and closing prayers found in the back of the missal that relate to the many needs we might want to address. For example, on the 4th of July we are invited to say the mass for the preservation of peace and justice. The prayers would come from the Masses for various needs and the priest might use the associated Eucharistic prayer for various needs. Finally, the Church in the United States wrote and approved a Prayer for the use with mainly children. The language of this prayer is more accessible to younger children. This prayer is often used within context of an elementary school Mass.

Night Six: The Concluding Rites, The Liturgical Calendar, and Advent

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray,

This evening we plan to discuss the concluding rites of the Mass, what to do after Mass, the liturgical calendar, and concluded with the season of advent.

The Concluding Rites:

The concluding rites are as their name suggests conclude the liturgy of the Mass. They consist of an invocation, a blessing, and a dismissal.

The invocation “The Lord be with you” and our response “and with your spirit” bring our collective focus together. Just as with all of the other times this invocation is made in the liturgy, this call and response invokes the lord on the gathered people are recognizes the Lord in the celebrant. This opens the concluding rites which continue with the blessing.

The Final Blessing:

The final blessing comes in four forms: a simple blessing, with a prayer over the people, a solemn blessing, or the pontifical blessing. The simple blessing is the one we are most familiar with “May almighty God

bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” with us responding “amen.” This blessing is used at the end of most liturgies. It is theologically unique as we begin the liturgy in the “name” of the trinity, but in a blessing, there trinity is evoked without this mediation because the one who blesses, blesses in the person of Christ. Less frequently used is the prayer over the people. The blessing is proceeded with “bow down for the blessing.” This is your signal that the blessing will be different. Most Catholics are not ready to this change in the liturgy, but now you are equipped. When instructed to, we bow our heads for the blessing. What follows is an additional prayer usually associated with the liturgical season. It is intended to strengthen us through the trials of the season.

The prayer asks for help through temptation and endurance until redemptions. These are the challenges that arise during the Lenten season. We respond to this prayer with “Amen.” So to reiterate: “Bow down for the blessing” means that we should be prepared to respond with an extra “amen.” The blessing itself is also different. We hear: “And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, and the

Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.” This blessing has two small changes. It uses the imagery of God’s blessing coming down on us, and it adds the request that this blessing abide with us forever. The solemn blessing is only slightly different from the prayer over the people in that it has three prayers that we respond to with “amen.”

The final form of the blessing is used fairly infrequently. The pontifical blessing may be used by a bishop at any of his masses. After the invocation the bishop says “Blessed be the name of the Lord” to which we respond “Now and forever.” He continues “Our help is in the name of the Lord” to which we respond “who made heaven and earth.” He continues with the simple blessing. This formula calls to mind our faith in the living God who is our help and our creator. The bishop blesses with a triple sign of the cross denoting his having the fullness of the Priesthood. A blessing is a “promise of divine help, a proclamation of his favor, a reassurance of his faithfulness to the covenant he had made

with his people” and at the same time is an “offering of praise to the one whose goodness and mercy they are proclaiming.”¹

The Dismissal:

After the final blessing comes the dismissal. At the dismissal the gathered congregation is sent to bring the message they have received from the liturgy to the world. The dismissal comes in two main forms. In the simple form, we hear “Go in peace,” and we respond “Thanks be to God.” There are three options for longer dismissals: “Go forth, the Mass is ended”, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord”, and God in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” The latter two dismissal make clearer what we are intended to do after dismissed: share the Gospel and to live a life that glorifies the Lord. The dismissal is a concretization of our common call to holiness and to sanctify the temporal order.

The dismissal is followed by a recession. The recession is either solemn or simple just like the procession. Either the ministers return to the doors of the church or make their way to the sacristy. The recession is a practical need for the Mass, but it provides valuable time for prayer and

¹ General Instruction of the Book of Blessings 6.

singing. Often the joyful tone, reminds us of Christ's victory over sin and death. There is a custom of signing one's self as the procession cross passes. This is a fine and beautiful expression of Catholic piety.

After Mass:

The time after mass is possibly the most underutilized portion of the liturgy. First, it is the ancient custom of the catholic church for all of the faithful to offer a prayer of thanksgiving after the Mass. In the old rite, the prayers were predetermined and prayed as a community. In the new rite, expectation of prayer is retained, but the mode of prayer is left to the individual. There are often suggestions in the backs of the parish missalette; there are options in each hand missal. The prayer may be as long or as short as is helpful for you. The number of prayers is not as important as the sincerity in which they are prayed. A mom trying to manage several children will probably not have the time she prefers to say six or so prayers, but the random dude in high school has time for something more developed than "thanks Jesus, see you next week. This can become a very valuable skill as we go to mass. This prayer provides continuity between the Mass and our returning to our ordinary lives.

Just as we need time to shift gears from the chaos of our lives to the structure of mass, it is helpful to have something to facilitate the shift from mass back to daily life. It does not need to be left to chance. How often do you leave Mass and are immediately submerged into the road rage in the church parking lot? There is something deeply wrong with this. It comes from the disconnect between the liturgy and our daily lives. Don't be part of the cycle. Pray in the church after mass. At the very least, the madhouse in the parking lot will have resolved itself by the time you go to leave. Less road rage will certainly help us keep the spirit of Mass flowing for a few more minutes.

Second, just as before mass, we should have a plan about after Mass. What are your prayers of thanksgiving? When will you reflect on what happened during the Mass? What will you be doing after mass? If we come to church with some of these questions pre-answered, we will be less opportunity to be distracted during mass. You don't have to have every word or moment of the day completely planned out months in advance, but have some semblance of a plan will reduce the things that

we worry about each week. Having a plan is not so much about being creative each and every week, but it is about having a pattern for you to follow. This will reduce some of your mental load each week which gives you less to be distracted by and more energy to pay attention with.

Third, it is the ancient custom in the catholic church that Sunday is reserved for the worship of God and family life. Take Sunday as a serious day of rest. Don't do things that wear you out, but do spend time with your family and friends. I know that not everyone can commit to this, but we should have a good reason before moving our family/friend day of rest from Sunday to another day. I choose my words carefully.

We were not made to work non-stop. Take a day of rest, if it can't be Sunday chose some other day to not work. There is nothing wrong with watching football on Sunday. In fact, it is a great way to relax, but don't let it distract you. Have a meal together where everyone pitches in. One thing that makes Sunday so difficult for us is that we try to do too much on that day.

Last, do the dismissal. This has less to do with what we do after mass on the particular Sunday and has more to do with what we do every day. Go sanctify the temporal order; live the life of holiness. Certainly practice it in your family and friends, but do not limit yourself to what is safe. See what you can get away with. Have a cross in your office. Hand a picture of your family from last Christmas. Let there be something Christian at your work. If you get fussed for it, try something else. You don't need to do much to get people's attention. Most people are already going to feel challenged by our way of life as it is. God speaks to them directly through their moral powers in their conscience. Let them see that Catholicism is an important part of your life and that you are still happy because of it. In fact, what you will be showing is that Christianity is a source of Joy in your life. Thus far we could have visualized a particular Sunday in which our participation in the Mass exists. Now we shift our focus to the larger picture.

The Liturgical Calendar:

Each individual mass exists within the context of the liturgical calendar. This is the ordered distribution of celebrations set out by the Church for

each year. Each week is capped and begun by the primordial celebration of the Lord's resurrection which is found on Sunday. Sunday constitutes the main and ordinary element of worship for the Christian people. As such, the church binds each of us to Sunday mass attendance. The whole year is a retelling of the whole of the life of Jesus Christ and the history of the Church. The year begins with his promised coming in the season of Advent. Advent gives way to Christmas day and the Christmas season which takes place over two weeks and celebrates the birth of the messiah and the mystery of the incarnation. A short period of Ordinary time, reminds us of the quiet years that Jesus lived on earth. It is a time of proclaiming the Gospel. As we know, a particular Gospel provides the material for this preaching throughout the whole year. Lent begins on ash Wednesday, and is our preparation for the coming of the Pascal Triduum. Lent calls us to repentance and conversion in the wake of the coming of the Lord's passion. It reminds us of Jesus Last troubled months on earth as he prepared for his passion. The Triduum allows us to more deeply experience passion of the Lord. Unlike the rest of the year. The three days of the Triduum constitute a single liturgy that

begins on Holy Thursday after which the tabernacles of the world lie empty. It is continued through Good Friday recalling the trial, crucifixion, and death. It concludes with the celebration of the Easter Vigil. The vigil presents the good news that the crucified Christ is no longer dead. Then begins the season of celebrating the resurrection. Many are frustrated by the length of the Lenten season; however, many miss the fact that the Easter season is several weeks longer. In the Easter season, we call to mind Christ's activity on earth after his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which ends the Easter season. At the same time, we read from the Acts of the Apostles which gives a glimpse into the life of the church at its infancy. All of this is so that we can enter into the long stretch of ordinary time which is our experience of the Church now. In ordinary time, we are called to take the readings and teachings of the whole liturgical year into our ordinary lives and to do what the apostles did after Pentecost. The liturgical calendar provides the ordinary ebb and flow to Catholic life.

During the liturgical year the celebrations are broke up into particular ranks. The highest ranks are the two principle feasts of Triduum and Christmas. Both of these feasts have multiple liturgies that are connected to each other. If one attends each of the Liturgies of Holy week including Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday the vigil and the morning mass, that person would experience all of the events of the passion of the Lord. The masses and their associated readings differ from the Vigil to the Mass during the Day. Certainly the principle feast is the Vigil but the whole five liturgies come together to form a single unit. Christmas is the same way. The Vigil, the mass a night, the mass at dawn, and the mass during the day all have unique readings and prayers that come together for form a unique theological whole. If you attended each of these liturgies and their proper readings were read, you would hear the whole account of the birth of Christ. Under these fall other Solemnities of our Lord such as Epiphany, the Ascension, Pentecost. These and many more solemnities have multiple masses and readings to highlight different elements of the mysteries. Alongside these in importance are the Sundays. Only Sundays of Ordinary time

can be out ranked. These are out ranked by solemnities in the general calendar. If for instance, November 1st is on a Sunday, we would still celebrate the solemnity. Also the principal patrons of the church, diocese or country can also out rank the Sundays in Ordinary time. We celebrate these what a solemnity not accustomed throughout the world. The feast of St. Francis de Sales is a solemnity in the diocese of Houma Thibodaux because Francis is the patron of our diocese. On solemnities and Sundays the Gloria is sung, the creed is said, and we hear two readings. The next step down are Feasts proper. These days are higher celebrations. They commemorate major saints such as the apostles and major events in the life of Christ. These are less ornate than the solemnities but not quite as plain as what follows. Feasts and above tend to have particular readings that are obligatory as well as proper prayers. Memorials commemorate the lives of the saints. The more common and major saints are obligatory. The lesser known saints' memorials are optional. These look little different from an ordinary daily mass but have some number of proper prayers. Finally, are the weekdays in ordinary time. The weekdays of ordinary time allow for

any mass in from the Sundays in Ordinary time or any votive mass, or any mass for various needs. The church suggests the free use of these various masses, but suggests that the ordinary flow of the readings not be disrupted arbitrarily.

The big question remains: How do we use the Liturgical Calendar to get more out of Mass? In general, if we allow the ordinary ebb and flow of the liturgical year to affect our lives and our prayer, we will get more out of each liturgical season. Mainly if we allow the penitential character of the Lenten season to become part of our life through penitence, we will get more out of Lent and have a more beautiful Easter. If we allow the anticipatory quality of Advent to sway our observance of the Advent season, we will have a richer Christmas Season. For Lent, we should seriously consider how we might give ourselves to prayer, fasting and alms giving. During the Advent season we should seriously consider how we are awaiting the coming of the Lord. So that during Easter and Christmas we may authentically rejoice with the Church. As with many things thus far, having a plan for the seasons is the best way to get the

most out of the season. We're all aware of the person who waits until Mardi Gras or Ash Wednesday to consider what they might give up for Lent. Take some time to think about this in advance. Secondly, if you give yourself time to think in advance, you will be able to consider if the decision is sincere. A penance should be substantial: not so easy that it is meaningless not so difficult that you cannot do it. During Ordinary time pick a particular virtue to grow in. One you are aware you lack and would like to have. Consider attending daily Mass or picking up a new prayer practice during Lent and Advent. Really rest and enjoy the freedom that comes with the celebratory seasons. Why are Easter and Christmas not all that special for us sometimes? It is possible that we do not work hard enough at our spiritual lives during the rest of the year that the rest doesn't mean anything. Imagine how much more you enjoy simple time off after you've worked really hard for a sustained period of time.

Advent:

Now let us turn our attention to the liturgical season that is quickly approaching. Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas Day and

concludes with the vigil on Christmas eve. The four Sundays of advent have three unique themes. On the first Sunday of advent, our Gospel focuses on the End Times. At the dawning of the liturgical year the Church points us toward to end of our existence. It is here to help us to prepare for the coming of the Christ in the liturgical year and the second coming of Christ in human history. The Second and third Sundays focus on John the Baptist and his ministry as precursor to Jesus. His themes are strongly wrapped around repentance. That we should change our lives in preparation of the coming messiah. His famous line “I must decrease so that He may increase” is a good motto for the Christian life. Beginning on December 17th the focus of the liturgy turns to the coming of Christ. The Divine office and the readings at mass turn towards prophecies of the coming of Christ. The Sunday within this period tells the Story of the Annunciation. During this period the gospel antiphon for evening prayer are very special. They are the origin of the Advent Hymn *O Come, O Come Emanuel*.

The season has a penitential character as we await the birth of Christ. Both the reflection on the end times and the life of John the Baptist are given to help us reflect on our inherent unworthiness. We are broken and incapable of fixing ourselves. We cannot help but be drawn to things that we know are bad for us. The whole world is broken and subject to futility and arbitrariness. The whole meaninglessness of existence can press people into deep depression. And into that comes the promise of a messiah. A savior whose life will rearrange all of this and leave us with so much more in the end. How do we prepare for his coming? John the Baptist suggests repentance. The Advent season provides an opportunity for us to seriously reflect on who we are and how we are doing. It is a good time to make a retreat. Many parishes offer revivals or missions during the season. There are dozens of resources for reflection. If you want to do one thing to help you get more out of Advent and make like no advent you have ever had, get involved with a daily reflection on the season. Join Bishop Robert Barron's Advent reflections. The link is on your hand out. If you can get your hands on a copy of this year's Theotokos Reflections do that.

Do more than just attend Sunday Mass this year. Considering joining us for daily mass a few times a week. You will get so much more out of Advent.

Now that the friendly stuff is all out of the way, let's talk about the white elephants in the room. Christmas commercialism or at least that how the peanuts lament the twisting of the holiday season. First, I know Christmas is THE largest gift giving celebration in the US. I am not saying don't buy presents for your loved ones. But do it with a sense of penitence as well. Don't lose who you are as a Catholic in trying to be nice to your family. There is a certain give and take here that God is asking us to use our prudence for. To put it bluntly, don't go stab people on Black Friday. Don't spend money that you don't have. Use your prudence and enjoy the season. I promise you, your children will get over their disappointment or not even notice if it's not totally perfect. At the least they will learn valuable life lessons.

Second, the Christmas season follows Christmas Day. I'm not saying don't put up a tree during the Lenten season, but don't go overboard

with the decoration as if Jesus is already come. I'm not saying don't do all of the deep and beautiful American Christmas customs, but do try to get some important catholic ones in there as well.

Have an advent wreath and light the candles. Find a prayer service to share with your family. The pink candle is for joy and is lit on the third week of advent. Erect a manger scene in your house or yard but don't put the Christ child in it until Christmas night. Want to anticipate Christmas try staring at that incomplete manger for four weeks. Finally consider doing some sort of charitable activity. We have the toy drive. Look around there are so many ways for you to get involved in doing for those who are struggling. There will be a lot more struggling families this holiday season because of the down turn in the economy. Consider how you might help at your church or at the food bank. This more than just about money or giving a Christmas to Children who won't have one as good as that is. This is about striving to conform yourself to the kind of life that Christ lived and the kind of life that he wants us to have.