

The MyStCatherines.org guide to **Engaging in Catholic Mass**

In front of you, or sometimes under your pew, you will find: A Holy Bible, *We Celebrate* Hymnal, a music card, and another book referred to as a "Missalette." This guide is not intended to replace any of these worship resources, but instead help you experience the Mass from a perspective of what is happening and why. Whether you are Catholic or not, know that you are welcome at Mass, as we trust you will experience Christ in your worship.

The Missalette is your true guide to Mass. In the front of the Missalette, you will find an exact guide to the entire Mass including versions (usually A, B, and C) of what the priest will say, and your response to these calls. It will also outline the Eucharistic Prayers with invocations and acclamations, and in the middle of the Missalette, by date; you will find all of the Scripture readings for the Liturgy of the Word. The song cards will show the words and music for the sung portions of the Mass including: The Kyrie (Lord, have mercy...); The Gloria (Glory to God...), the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia, Alleluia); The Holy, Holy; The Amen (for Eucharistic Benediction); The Mystery of Faith, and The Lamb of God. Large print versions are available from the ushers.

Mass

The Gathering Rite

The members of St. Catherine's begin Mass by entering the sanctuary, touching their hand to the holy water and making the Sign of the Cross. This invokes a blessing on each person, while the water symbolizes our unity in Holy Baptism. You will notice that each person bows or lowers unto their right knee (genuflect) prior to sitting down. This is our recognition and display of reverence that Christ is in our presence within Tabernacle at the Altar. Many members choose to kneel prior to Mass in prayer. You will also hear a lay minister leading the Rosary. This is a time for quiet prayer and preparation for worship.

Our song leader (or cantor) will announce a welcome, and an opening song for all to stand and join in singing to give thanks and praise to God.

The priest asks us to continue our prayer with the Sign of the Cross. All bless themselves in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The priest now extends a greeting to the assembly, to which the assembly responds, "and with your Spirit."

It is now at this time that we call to mind our sins, and the Salvation works of the Lord in freeing us from sin. You will likely hear, and repeat or sing, "Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy"

After we ask for mercy, everyone joins in singing the same praises as the Christmas angels, long ago, the Glory to God. Occasionally this hymn of glory is omitted.

Once the Gloria is finished, the priest asks the assembly to pray. He then collects all of the assembly's individual silent prayers (remember gathering before Mass) and says the given opening prayer for the day. The assembly's response is "Amen." And you may be seated.

The Liturgy of the Word

The first reading is usually read from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). The exception to this is during the Easter season when we listen to the stories of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles. The lector will finish the reading by saying: "The Word of the Lord," to which we respond, "Thanks be to God."

The psalm is taken from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Book of Psalms. The psalm is sung in a call-and-response format and so is called the Responsorial Psalm. This is printed in the Missalette, including the music.

The next or second reading is from the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). The lector will finish the reading saying: "The Word of the Lord," to which we respond, "Thanks be to God."

At this time, we begin The Gospel Acclamation and we all stand and sing "Alleluia" while the Word of God is raised-up in adoration. The priest now extends a greeting, "The Lord be with you" to which we respond, "and with your Spirit." The priest will now tell the assembly from which gospel he will be reading to which the assembly responds, "Glory to you, O Lord" This time, we trace small crosses over our foreheads, lips and hearts to symbolize that the Word of God is to be on our mind, in our speaking and in our hearts, so as to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel. At the end of the proclamation, the priest says, "the Gospel of the Lord" and we respond, "Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ." And are seated for the homily (sermon).

The homily is given by the priest or deacon to help the assembly better understand our relationship with God and one another in our lives.

After the homily, a moment of silence may be observed to let the Word of God and the homily settle into the hearts of all present. We then stand together and unite in reciting our profession of faith, usually using the “Nicene Creed” found within the Missalette.

The prayers of the faithful are voiced for the Church, world leaders, those who are poor or oppressed, local community, for the sick and the deceased. Each of these prayers end with these or similar words, “we pray to the Lord” to which we respond, “Lord, hear our prayer.” After the last prayer, the priest will gather all the prayers spoken and silent and voice one closing prayer while asking that these prayers be answered by God through “Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you (God), in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever” to which we respond, “Amen.” And are seated.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

A collection is taken up to support the needs of the parish and outreach efforts while a song is sung from our hymnal.

Then from our community, the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward to the priest. These gifts will be prayed over and made Holy by God, through the Holy Spirit, called forth by the intentions of the ordained priest and of the gathered faithful around the table. This is the prayer that Catholics call the Eucharistic Prayer. It is our great prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Through these prayers and acclamations the priest and assembly speak and sing, Catholics believe that what once was bread is now the Body of Christ and that what once was wine is now the Blood of Christ.

Before Catholics partake of this very special meal, they extend to one another a sign of Christ’s peace. The priest will say, “The peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all,” to which we respond, “And with your Spirit.” He will then say, “Let us share a sign of peace.” This is usually a handshake or an embrace while saying “Peace be with you” to those around you.

Fraction Rite and Communion

Once the sign of peace is extended, the priest will begin to break apart the Body of Christ and divide it into smaller vessels for distribution. The Blood of Christ is now poured into several chalices. This moment is called the Fraction Rite or the breaking of the bread. The priest and Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (those who are trained to assist with the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ) then go to positions

around the sanctuary in order to distribute Holy Communion to the assembly.

It is the belief of all Catholics that this meal is the Body and Blood of Christ. While all are welcome to give thanks and praise to God with this Catholic community, receiving Holy Communion is a sign of a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, as well as membership (“full communion”) to a particular Christian denomination. For this reason, we invite only active Catholics to the Communion table. If you are not a Catholic but would like a blessing, you may approach an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or the priest with your arms crossed and folded over your chest. This tells the minister or the priest that you would like to receive a blessing. If you so choose to stay in the pew, you may take a moment to offer silent prayer or join in singing praises during the Communion hymns.

After the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ, the assembly, once again, shares a moment of silence.

After the silence, the priest will stand to give announcements and may call others forward to give announcements as well. Special music, dedications, or blessings may also be given at this time.

Once completed, the priest will offer a prayer to which we will respond, “Amen.”

The Rite of Sending, The Final Blessing and Dismissal

The priest will say, “The Lord be with you.”

Then we will respond, “and with your Spirit.”

The priest will then give the assembly a blessing followed by tracing the sign of the cross over the assembly as members of the assembly sign themselves, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Then the priest will dismiss the assembly and give us our mission to “go forth to love and serve the Lord and one another” or simply “go forth, the Mass has ended.” The assembly then responds, “Thanks be to God.”

The Closing Song is announced, and as we sing, the celebrants leave the sanctuary. Once the hymn has concluded, we take a moment to again acknowledge Christ’s presence through genuflecting before leaving the worship space, and using the holy water to again remind us of our Baptismal promises and mission to go forth and serve our Lord.