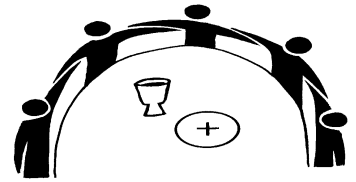


Come to the Feast

Further Reading 1: Gather



Background

General Instruction of the Roman Missal

27. At Mass or the Lord's Supper the People of God is called together, with a Priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic Sacrifice. In an outstanding way there applies to such a local gathering of the holy Church the promise of Christ: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst' (Mt 18: 20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and uninterruptedly under the Eucharistic species.
28. The Mass consists in some sense of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass is spread the table both of God's Word and of the Body of Christ, and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed. There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration.

Celebrating the Mass

- 21 The celebration of Mass is the action of Christ and the Church, which is "the Sacrament of unity", namely the holy people of God united and ordered under the Bishop. It is the action in which the Christian people, 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart', expresses its unity and its nature. It is the action of the whole people of God, ministers and congregation, united with Christ, who is head of the Body.

Within the one body of Christ there are many gifts and responsibilities. But just as each organ and limb is necessary for the sound functioning of the body (see 1 Corinthians 12), so every member of the assembly has a part to play in the action of the whole. It is therefore of the greatest importance that in all circumstances and on every occasion the celebration be so organised that priest, ministers, and faithful may all take their own part. The participation of all is demanded by the nature of the liturgy, and, for the faithful, is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

- By apostolic tradition, the Church gathers on the Lord's Day to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This Sunday Eucharist, at which the entire local community assembles and in which all play their proper parts, is the primary manifestation of the local Church and, as such, the most important and normative form of Eucharistic celebration. It should be in every sense inclusive and not be needlessly multiplied. (Although more than one mass will often be celebrated in a parish on a Sunday a balance needs to be kept between what is convenient, and what helps the Church to become an authentic community of faith and mission and celebrate the Liturgy fully, richly and reverently.) The celebration of other Sacraments, when the Roman Ritual allows, may be accommodated within it.

Week 1: Gather

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

7. To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, "the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross" but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in His word, since it is

He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

General Instruction of the Roman Missal

A. THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

46. The rites preceding the Liturgy of the Word, namely the Entrance, Greeting, Penitential Act, Kyrie, Gloria, and Collect, have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation.

Their purpose is to ensure that the faithful, who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.

In certain celebrations that are combined with Mass according to the norms of the liturgical books, the Introductory Rites are omitted or performed in a particular way.

The Entrance

47. After the people have gathered, the Entrance chant begins as the priest enters with the deacon and ministers. The purpose of this chant is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.

Celebrating the Mass

Assembly

- 22 Christ is always present in the Church, particularly in its liturgical celebrations. In the celebration of Mass, which is a memorial of the Sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present first of all in the assembly itself: "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matthew 18: 20). At Mass "the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavour to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration."
- 23 The liturgical assembly is never a random group of individuals but the gathering of God's people to exercise its royal priesthood in the sacrifice of praise. Everything in the celebration is organised to encourage and foster an awareness of this assembly's common dignity and purpose, mutual interdependence, and connectedness with the wider Church.
- 24 The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Peter 2:9; see 2:45) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.
- In the celebration of the Eucharist the assembly is united in and by the principal actions of gathering, listening to God's word, praying for the life of the Church and the world, giving thanks, sharing communion and being sent out for the work of loving and serving God.
 - Times for silent reflection allow the assembly to engage more deeply in the mystery being celebrated.
 - The dialogues between the assembly and its ministers, and the acclamations have a special value as signs of communal action and as means of effective communication. More importantly yet they foster and bring about communion between priest and people.
 - Singing is one of the most potent of all expressions of communal awareness and common purpose.
 - Uniformity in posture and gesture likewise expresses and fosters a unity of spirit and purpose.