

## **OCIA Session Outline: The Mass**

### **Purpose of the Mass • Parts of the Mass • Participation of the Faithful**

#### **1. Why the Mass Matters**

##### **Main Points**

- The Mass is the Church's central act of worship (CCC 1324–1327).
- Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made present sacramentally.
- We encounter Christ in His Word and in the Eucharist.
- The Mass unites heaven and earth in one act of praise.

##### **Scripture**

- Luke 22:19
- John 6:51
- Acts 2:42

##### **Key Summary**

The Mass is not symbolic. It is a real encounter with the living Christ.

#### **2. What the Mass Does**

##### **Main Points**

- Gives glory and worship to God, the first purpose of all liturgy (CCC 1066–1070).
- Makes present Christ's saving work.
- Sanctifies the faithful.
- Builds up the Church as the Body of Christ.
- Sends the faithful into the world to live what they have received.

##### **Plain Explanation**

God is the center of the Mass. We worship Him first, and He changes us in the process. Worship comes first. Transformation follows.

#### **3. The Structure of the Mass**

##### **A. Introductory Rites**

## **Purpose**

- Gather the community.
- Place us consciously in God's presence.
- Prepare our hearts.

## **Includes**

- Entrance
- Sign of the Cross
- Penitential Act
- Gloria (when appropriate)
- Opening Prayer

## **Beginner Note**

These rites are not warm-up time. They prepare us for worship.

## **B. Liturgy of the Word**

### **Purpose**

- God speaks to His people through Scripture (CCC 103).
- We hear, reflect, and respond with faith.

### **Includes**

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel
- Homily
- Creed
- Prayer of the Faithful

### **Beginner Tip**

Listen for one line that stays with you. Let it shape your week.

## **C. Liturgy of the Eucharist**

## **Purpose**

- The Church offers the same sacrifice Christ offered on the Cross, now made present sacramentally.
- We join Jesus in His prayer to the Father. The priest prays aloud, but the whole Church participates.
- Ordinary bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- In Holy Communion, we receive Christ Himself, not a symbol.
- By receiving Him, we are united *to Christ* and *to each other*. This communion forms the Church as one Body (CCC 1325, 1331, 1368).
- Christ strengthens us to live the Gospel with His life in us.

## **Includes**

- Preparation of the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Lamb of God
- Communion

## **Key Point**

This is the moment we are closest to Jesus. We share His sacrifice, hear His prayer, receive His Body and Blood, and become one with Him and with each other.

## **D. Concluding Rites**

### **Purpose**

- The Lord sends us out strengthened and changed.

### **Includes**

- Blessing
- Dismissal

## **Meaning**

The dismissal is a mission: “Go.” Not “We’re done.”

## **4. Participation of the Faithful**

### **A. Full, Conscious, and Active Participation (SC 14)**

Interior engagement.

Listening.

Praying.

Offering oneself with Christ.

### **B. Gestures and Postures**

#### **Why they matter**

Catholic worship uses the whole person. Our bodies pray with our souls. Catholic worship isn’t only interior. What we do physically shapes how we think and pray.

These actions teach us humility, reverence, attentiveness, and love.

#### **Standing**

- Sign of respect and readiness.
- We stand for the Gospel because Christ is present in his word.

#### **Sitting**

- A posture of listening and reflection.
- Used for the readings (except the Gospel), the homily, and after Communion.

#### **Kneeling**

- A posture of humility and adoration.
- We kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer as Christ becomes present on the altar.

#### **Bowing**

- A gesture of reverence.
- A deeper bow before receiving Communion expresses respect for Christ’s Real Presence.

#### **Striking the breast (“through my fault”)**

- A sign of acknowledging personal sin.
- It expresses honesty before God, not shame.

### **Sign of the Cross**

- The simplest confession of faith in the Trinity.
- Marks us as belonging to Christ.

### **Beginner Guidance**

Do not worry about doing everything perfectly. These gestures form the heart over time.

## **C. Receiving Holy Communion**

### **What “state of grace” means**

A person is in a state of grace when:

- They are free of mortal sin.
- They are living in friendship with God.
- They intend to live as a disciple and avoid serious sin.

It is not about perfection. It is about honesty and friendship with God. The Church asks that only Catholics in the state of grace receive Communion because receiving Christ is a real union. It calls for integrity between belief, life, and action.

### **How Communion works at our parish**

- A simple bow before receiving shows reverence.

The communicant responds “Amen” to the words “The Body of Christ,” expressing faith in the Real Presence and the teachings of the Church.

### **About the crossed-arms practice**

Some parishes invite those not receiving Communion to come forward with arms crossed for a blessing.

This is meant to be welcoming.

### **Our parish does not use this practice. Why:**

- The Communion procession is ordered toward receiving the Eucharist, not distributing blessings.

- It can unintentionally feel like a consolation prize or create two “types” of people in the line. Which is the opposite intention. We strive for unity.
- There is a final blessing for all at the end of Mass.

**If someone is not receiving, the most respectful and prayerful option is simply to remain in the pew and make a spiritual communion from the heart.**

#### **D. Interior Disposition**

- Arrive a bit early if possible.
- Bring intentions.
- Listen for what God is saying.
- Give thanks after Communion.

#### **5. Why Sunday Matters**

- Sunday is the day of Resurrection (CCC 2177).
- The Mass obligation protects the relationship with Christ.
- Weekly worship anchors Christian life.

#### **Beginners Need to Hear**

This is not about checking a box. It is about showing up to receive Christ.

#### **6. Final Encouragement**

The Mass may feel repetitive or confusing at first.

That's normal.

The repetition is intentional. It shapes your heart over time.

Keep coming. Understanding will follow.