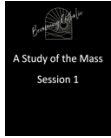


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Matters of the heart are instinctive. You get them or you don't. Either beauty draws you in or it doesn't. However, like appreciating fine art, sometimes you need first to study the particulars that make it "fine."

We are going to spend the next several sessions looking deeply at the Mass. We will consider a lot of whats and whys but at a level above that I hope you will gain some insights about the beauty of the Mass.



This event takes place on the day of the Resurrection and introduces us to two disciples: Cleopas and an unnamed person, who may have been Cleopas's wife or may have been the author, Luke.

They are on their way back home to Emmaus, which is seven miles from Jerusalem. In effect the disciples are walking away from Jesus.

As the disciples continue on their journey, Jesus joins them, but "their eyes were prevented" from recognizing him. Note that Jesus walks with them away from Jerusalem. Pope Francis often highlights this detail from Scripture and describes it as Jesus "accompanying them on the way." Emphasizing that God is always with us, even when we turn our backs on him.

The journey begins to resemble the Mass when Jesus, who has still not revealed his identity, starts explaining Scripture to the disciples — similar to Liturgy of the Word at Mass. Once Jesus and the disciples get to Emmaus, the disciples invite this "stranger" to eat with them, and Jesus shares Communion. Luke describes how Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and shared it with the disciples. Note that this is the same phrase that is used describing the Last Supper. This resembles the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At that point, they finally recognize Jesus. He vanishes, and they immediately return to Jerusalem to share their encounter with the risen Christ. Their going forth to share the good news resembles the Rite of Sending in the Mass.



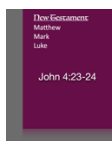
It is of note that our bishop, Daniel Mueggenborg, as a young priest came across a book titled *What Happens at Mass* and was moved to a more profound appreciation for the Mass beyond

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what he had gained even in the seminary. Later as Auxiliary Bishop he gave a copy to all the priests in his diocese. After his appointment to the diocese of Reno, he again provided a copy of the book to all of the priests and the deacons in this diocese.



The two primary sources for this series of presentations then are the book, *What Happens at Mass* by Abbot Jeremy Driscoll. And Bishop Mueggenborg's Meaning of Mass Study Guide based on this book.



I want to turn now to a passage from the Gospel of John. It is part of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well where he tells her,

"But the hour is coming... when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." That is the core of what this series is about, helping us to worship God in spirit and in truth.



Then there is this caution from Bishop Mueggenborg, in Meaning of Mass, a Study Guide:

It's easy to presume that we know what it means to be Catholic and Christian. That presumption can lead us down the wrong path to a misunderstanding of the Mass – which can cause us to be frustrated, disengaged, bored, and miss out on the life-transforming experience God wants to offer us. [Pg 3]



Furthermore, in *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the Second Vatican Council calls for the faithful to be led to a

"fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations" (No. 14).

This call is met in part by participation in the responses at Mass, both in words and song.

Active participation also includes serving in one or more of several ministries that assist with the liturgy.

However, external participation is nonetheless secondary to internal participation.

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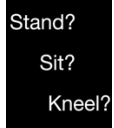
Pope St. John Paul II said:

“Active participation certainly means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship... Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening indeed, it demands it.”

While lay liturgical ministries are important roles, ministry is it not the principal example of active participation. Every single person is called to active participation, which takes place with our interior disposition as we foster an interior union with Jesus Christ and a union with the priest who offers our prayers to God at the altar.

So, let's begin looking at what happens at Mass.

These sessions are going to answer some questions such as:



- Why do we stand, sit, or kneel at specific times during the Mass?



- Where do the prayers we say at Mass come from?



- When does Jesus actually become present in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity?



- How can I engage more at Mass?

However, the first question we should consider, the one that underlies all the other questions you might have regarding the Mass, is this: What precisely is the Mass?

We'll be exploring the answer to this throughout this series. But for starters here are a few ways, one can think about the Mass:

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- The Mass is our participation in the one perfect Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.



- The Mass is our participation in true communion with God and one another.



- The Mass is our taste on this earth of the full perfection we will experience in the Kingdom of Heaven.



- The Mass is the perfect worship of the Father in heaven, and it is a source of grace and blessings.

I'd like each of you to choose a characterization that most resonates with you – either one of these or some other that you may prefer. Now write it out. Hold on to what you wrote and then periodically, throughout these sessions, reflect on it, and consider how your understanding may shift or might be enhanced, or even reinforced. You just might see how the Holy Spirit is working in you over time to inspire you in how you view the Mass.



Next, let's consider our bishop's characterization of the Mass as stated in his Study Guide:

"a spiritual conversation between God the Father and Jesus the Son. The Church participates in this conversation as the Body of Christ... we and God listen and speak."



The bishop continues with this admonition:

We must know what's happening in every part of this conversation to participate fully and intentionally.

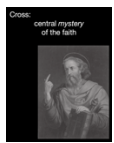
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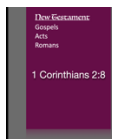
To understand the Mass better it is helpful to consider how the Church understands three key terms: *mystery, sacrament and liturgy*. Helpful because the Mass encompasses all three.



In common language, a *mystery* is something we cannot understand, or a *mystery* is something to be solved.

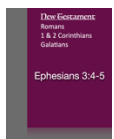


In contrast, St. Paul writes about the Cross of Christ as the central *mystery* of the faith meaning that there was something hidden in the Cross of Christ that we cannot understand *without it being revealed*.



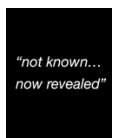
In the second chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that Christ was crucified because...

"None of the rulers of this age understood the mystery [a secret and hidden wisdom of God]"



And in his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes of

"the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"



In this context then, *mystery* is not something we cannot understand, but rather something we cannot understand completely, and something that requires God's revelation as a starting point.

Abbot Jeremy Driscoll defines mystery as

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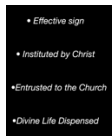
“a concrete something that when you bump into it, it puts you in contact with a divine reality.”



Mystery is the first of three terms uniquely pertinent to understanding the Mass. Sacrament is the second term and is closely related to mystery.



The Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines Sacrament this way:



An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Catechism then notes that the Sacraments are “called *mysteries* in the Eastern Churches.” While we will consider this more later, for now, note that two of the seven Sacraments are incorporated into the Mass: Reconciliation and Eucharist. And like all Sacraments these are concrete somethings that put us in contact with a divine reality.



The last of the three terms is liturgy. The Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines liturgy this way:

In its original meaning, a “public work” or service done in the name of or on behalf of the people. Through the liturgy Christ our High Priest continues the work of our redemption through the Church’s celebration of the Paschal Mystery...

Note that “mystery” is also linked to liturgy.



Bishop Mueggenborg elaborates on the definition writing,

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"A Liturgy is something that Christ does for us - the ultimate Liturgy of Jesus in His Death and Resurrection..."



We don't make the Liturgy; the Liturgy makes us."

Now that we have a shared understanding of mystery, sacrament and liturgy, let's unpack the Mass into its underlying components.



Abbot Driscoll states, *"Mass begins long before it begins."* What do you think he means with this statement? **(Take answers from the audience...)**



The Abbot suggests that Mass figuratively begins with "the gathering." He writes that there is, *"deep theological significance hidden in the arrival of many people coming from many places to one place to celebrate the Eucharist... The Mass begins as the assembly forms."*

From this communal beginning of the Mass, figuratively speaking, we move to an individualized, personal beginning.

What is one of the first things Catholics typically do when entering a Catholic church? What personal act is usually the very first act upon entering the House of God? **(Take answers from the audience...)**



Intentionally blessing ourselves with holy water as we enter the church recalls the day that we entered - or will enter - God's family, reminding us we are beloved children of the Father.

This first gesture as we enter the main section of the church helps us to know that we belong, that we have been invited to take part in the unfolding of the Mass. When I bless myself, I like to say, "I belong here."

Those are two ways Abbot Driscoll suggests that the Mass "begins before it begins".

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A third way one might consider the Mass “beginning before it begins” is the priest, more specifically the celebrant, prayerfully putting on his vestments.

The word "vestment" comes from Latin. It simply means clothing.

However, as we are using the term here, vestments are more than clothing, each article of clothing is a sacramental. That means they are set apart and blessed by the Church to increase devotion in those who wear them and those who see them worn. They are the uniform of the priest when he is "on duty," while he is exercising the sacred powers received at ordination.

Mass vestments were originally the ordinary garments of the ancient Roman world. Thus, the priest, vested for Mass today, witnesses to the historical continuity of the Catholic Church.



The first vestment is the Amice. No longer required, it is an optional vestment, placed first on the head – recalling St. Paul’s remark in his letter to the Ephesians 6:17 to “Take the helmet of salvation” – and then placed on the shoulders and tied appropriately. As he does so, the priest prays...



The Alb is a long, white linen tunic that covers the entire body. It symbolizes the innocence and purity that should adorn the soul of the priest. While it is white in the Western Church, it can be of any color in the Eastern Church. As he puts on the Alb, the celebrant prays...



Over the alb and around the waist is placed the cincture, a cord that is used as a belt.



The stole is an embroidered strip of material. The color is one appropriate for the season or feast.

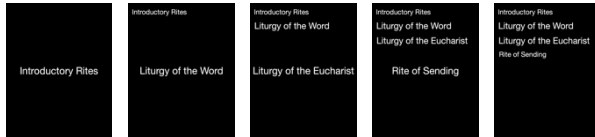


The Chasuble is the final vestment the priests puts on. The chasuble represents the yoke of Christ.

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Several years ago, I recall, a child, on seeing the priest wearing vestments, asked her parent, “Is Fr. Larry a Jedi?”



At the highest level, consider that the Mass as comprised of 4 movements: two minor and two major. The first movement is the minor one of the Introductory Rites. The second movement is a major one – the Liturgy of the Word. This is followed by the second major movement, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. And the final movement is the Rite of Sending. With this as the general structure of the Mass, we will move to consider the component parts of these four movements next time.