

What Happens at Mass?

A short guide by Fr. Dave Heney based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Sections 1322-1419, and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

What is the Mass and what do you do there?

The mass is the words and actions of Jesus that reveal the highest gift of love, which is to offer your life for the authentic good of another as God desires. Jesus sacrificed His life to God for your true and lasting happiness ...especially on the cross. Nothing would stop His love for you! At Mass He still offers His life for your true happiness. *At every Mass you can join the offering of your life to His ...in His gift of Himself to God ...just as He did on the cross.* Every Mass is that same one time sacrificial loving gift of His life ...that you prayerfully join yourself to ...right here at St. Bruno Catholic Church ... and at every Mass.

Before going to Mass

Choosing your clothing always sends a message. Some affirm Jesus loves you no matter what you wear while others choose special clothes to show respect for Him. Either way, consider the message you send by your choices. In our ancient custom, men never wear hats in church while women may.

Where do you focus your attention in Church?

Before entering your pew, make a simple head bow or genuflection to Our Lord in the tabernacle. That is the golden container behind the altar where the Eucharist is kept between Masses. When you cross the church from one side to the other you make a simple head bow to His real presence there. During Mass your main focus is the Altar where Our Lord is present in His words and deeds. Right after communion, Our Lord is within you, so your focus is only on Him in your heart for your prayerful contemplation.

Why do you stand, kneel, genuflect, and sit during the Mass?

Standing is a sign of life and your full human dignity. Kneeling is a sign of submission to a higher power. Genuflecting is a momentary sign of respect. Sitting is a sign of relaxed listening. We all follow the same gestures together during Mass except for the very personal time of contemplation after communion.

Opening Greeting (standing)

The Priest will greet everyone and announce if there is any special theme for the Mass.

Penitential Rite (standing)

The Priest invites you to think about where you might need forgiveness. You begin Mass with a simple act of honesty about yourself. You do so not by kneeling but by standing at your full height, just as you are, honestly and truthfully before God.

Opening Prayer (standing)

The Priest opens with a prayer that expresses the Church's desire for God's grace at this Mass. You can always add your own personal intentions as He prays.

Readings, Psalm Response, and Gospel (sitting and standing)

You listen and learn from the Word of God. The First Reading and Gospel have a common theme each week. The Second Reading is not linked but still offers wise insights. The Psalm musically expresses our feelings about the readings. We stand for the Gospel since it relates the very words and deeds of Jesus.

Homily (sitting)

The Priest or Deacon will try to apply the readings in a practical way to your daily life and how the readings can make your life happier by following the wisdom of Our Lord.

The Profession of Faith (standing)

Before we enter the central prayers of the Mass we reaffirm our core basic beliefs.

Prayers of the Faithful (standing)

Here we bring to God our prayers and love for those in our community who need our prayerful help.

Offertory and Collection (sitting)

This is an important time for you! As the gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar to be consecrated and transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, you also place your own personal commitment to love along with them, and ask that it be taken to God as well. The collection is the time for your heartfelt donation, also placed on the altar, which will support the mission of Our Lord in His church at St. Bruno. It is your sacred gift that can only be used for that sacred purpose.

Eucharistic Prayer (standing and kneeling)

You stand at the Preface Prayer that affirms all the Angels and Saints are also with you now! You kneel in profound respect during the words and actions where Our Lord consecrates and transforms bread and wine into His Body and Blood, as the gift of Himself to God for your lasting happiness. Giving of yourself for the good of another is the true key to your happiness too. Bells ring at these most sacred moments.

Our Father (standing)

Since God is "Our Father," this prayer composed by Jesus affirms we are all brothers and sisters. Soon afterwards you extend His gift of peace to those around you with a simple nod or handshake.

Receiving Communion (standing)

You will take the real presence of Our Lord within you! Before receiving, make a simple head bow. If receiving on the hand, hold your palms out, one on top of the other. When the host is placed there immediately consume it. If receiving on the tongue, hold your head back, open your mouth, and extend your tongue. If you receive from the Chalice, take it firmly in your hands and take a sip. The minister will wipe the rim for the next person. The metal cup, the wiping of the rim, the alcohol content, and turning the rim for the next person all help to eliminate germs.

After Communion Meditation (standing or kneeling or sitting)

This sacred time is the very purpose of your going to Mass! Jesus is now within you and wants to personally speak with you! Return to your pew and spend time in quiet conversation with Our Lord. *The Church does not formally direct communal gestures during your personal conversation with Jesus.* Your focus is on Him and nowhere else. *You may stand, sit, or kneel.* You can ask for the grace you might need now ...and how you will be different and better today ...now that you have His Real Presence within you.

Dismissal: Go, you are sent into the world!

The name "Mass" comes from the Latin "Missa" which means "*You are sent!*" The very name of the Mass means that your purpose is now to leave the church to take the Real Presence of Our Lord within you in all the events of your day and to make a real difference there ...*precisely because you have the Lord within you!*