

Summary of the Mass

Last week Father Scott described the Mass as a play in two Acts, an active conversation.

It is a **Living Tradition** based on roots in Jewish, Greek, Roman and Middle Ages traditions, and founded on a careful oral tradition passed on from the 1st Century AD.

Before Mass begins, upon entering Church, the first thing Catholics do is dip their fingers into **holy water** and make the sign of the cross.

This water has been blessed at the Easter Vigil for the express purpose of being used in the baptizing of catechumens.

When we bless ourselves with this holy water we are manually recalling our Baptism, in which we promised to die to sin and live for Christ.

The next thing we do before taking a seat is to **genuflect** or bow to the tabernacle.

The tabernacle contains the Blessed Sacrament, which we believe to be the Real and Living Presence of Jesus Christ. So, we genuflect or bow to our King, honouring him, before entering the row where we will sit.

Then the Mass begins:

After the **Entrance Procession**, we begin the active conversation of the Mass by talking to God through

- prayers of **sorrow** (I confess to Almighty God... that I have sinned through my own fault... Lord have Mercy),
- then we say a prayer of **praise** (Glory to God in the highest)
- and then a prayer of **petition**. (this is the Opening prayer, which Father described as the "Overature", in which the theme of Mass is set. (p.519)
This petition ends with the words, "Through Christ our Lord"

Then it is God's turn to speak to us, through the readings.

- In the first reading God speaks to us **through the Prophets** in the Old Testament.
- Then we read or sing the **Psalm** (which acts as a bridge between the Old and the New, as these songs or poems were prayed by both the people of the Old Testament and also by Jesus.)
- In the second reading, God speaks to us **through the Apostles** (the letters of St. Paul, or James, or Peter)

- In the third reading, the Gospel, **Jesus speaks directly** to us through the account of his words and actions.

(We stand for the Gospel as a sign of respect and special attention to Jesus' words.

Also we make those three crosses to ask that God's word be always in our

minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.)

-- Last of all, we hear the Homily, in which God speaks to us **through his Church**, in the person of the priest.

!! The choice of readings is not random!! Listen carefully for the theme which is usually consistent throughout all of them.

The Creed: Following the Homily we stand again to publicly declare what we believe.

Either the Apostles Creed or Nicene Creed may be said. Both are ancient prayers by which the Church has proclaimed its faith for more than 1500 years. Essentially they say the same thing if you compare them. They state **the core beliefs** of the Catholic faith.

Finally, we have the **Prayer of the Faithful** or **General Intercessions**

These are Prayers of Petition said by the priest, asking for what we need in our daily lives

- 1st, we always pray for the Church -- the people of God.
- 2nd, for the world (for peace)
- 3rd for the Church's leadership (the Pope and Bishop by name)
- 4th for our local community (St. Clare's parish)
- 5th for particular needs.

In response to these prayers of petition we respond, "Lord, hear our prayer".

This concludes the first part of the Mass (the first act in the play) -- **The Liturgy of the Word**

Next is Act 2: **The Liturgy of the Eucharist** ("Eucharist" means "giving thanks")

The **Collection or Offering** (which Father discussed last week) is followed by

the **Offertory Procession** (or what is called Bringing Up the Gifts.)

The members of the congregation chosen to carry up the gifts of money, bread, wine and water represent all of us present.

In offering these things, we also silently offer ourselves.

So, thus far in this conversation both God and we have talked, then exchanged gifts.

Listen to the words -- " which earth has given and human hands have made."

These gifts (bread and wine) are things which God and man have made together.

In the **Offertory Prayer**, the priest says, "Lift up your hearts", and we respond, "We lift them up to the Lord."

St. Augustine said we come in from our daily lives, dismiss our cares and anxieties, and lift our hearts to God for Him to lighten them.

Listen for the **Preface**, a prayer full of theology said by the priest.

The Preface is ancient. It goes all the way back to the early Church when Christianity was still a sect within Judaism. Most of the elements of the prayer, including the "Holy, Holy, Holy" were part of a prayer said every morning in the synagogue.

The words "Holy, Holy, Holy" (said 3 times to magnify it) are also found in the Book of Revelation, in a vision of Angels around the throne of God.

Our liturgy on Earth (in other words, our praise and worship of God) is supposed to be a reflection of the worship of God in Heaven.

The short prayer of the Preface explains our faith. There are 8 different ones in Ordinary time for the priest to choose from, plus separate ones for weekday Mass and for special occasions like during Advent, Lent or special feast days.

Next is the **Eucharistic Prayer**. This prayer of thanks is **the HIGHLIGHT and CENTRE of the Mass**.

Its form has been handed down to the Church from the Jewish tradition of praising and blessing God for his gifts.

There are 4 main Eucharistic Prayers, dating from as early as the 4th century. Fr. Scott uses the one from the 7th Century. "Lord, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise."

Last week Father said the Mass makes Calvary present to us.

On Calvary Jesus GAVE his life in sacrifice. It was not taken from him.

Jesus is the LAST Covenant God made with His people.

In the past, in the Old Testament, people broke their covenants with God. But this New Covenant cannot be broken because Jesus is God with a human nature.

At the Last Supper and on Calvary, an unbreakable covenant was made between God and God.

At Mass, we are at the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. It is the same Victim, the same Priest, but the Mass is an unbloody sacrifice.

During the Eucharistic Prayer the priest asks God the Father to send his Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of Jesus.

It is the Holy Spirit, acting through the priest, who transforms the bread and wine and makes them Holy.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is invoked at this time to ask that all who share in the Body and Blood of Christ may be brought together in unity and become one body, one spirit in Christ.

At the **Consecration**, as the priest recites the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, it is more than a retelling of events: it is a making present.

As the priest repeats the words, we are brought into the presence of the event that Jesus attached to the Last Supper -- his death on the cross at Calvary.

The Consecration is the moment when the bread and wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit , become the Body and Blood of Christ as the priest recites the words of Jesus over them.

There was a time during the Middle Ages when people almost never received Communion because they felt unworthy to do so. During that time, "ocular" (to see) Communion became a spiritual practice. They would look at the raised Host and Chalice during the Consecration, and, in imitation of St. Thomas, silently pray his words of faith, "My Lord and My God." This silent act of faith in the **true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament** is still practiced by many Catholics today. (story of St. Thomas)

At every Mass, at the Consecration, I always think of Jesus saying to his apostles at the Last Supper, "How I have longed for this moment..." and also his promise: "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world."

After the Consecration, Jesus is truly and fully present under the appearances of both bread and wine.

His presence -- Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity -- remains in the consecrated Bread and Wine after the celebration of the Eucharist is over. This is one reason why we reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle after Mass.

The doctrine of Real Presence is a doctrine of faith. Saint Thomas Aquinas said, it "cannot be apprehended by the senses, but only by faith."

After the Consecration, we acclaim the **Mysteries of Faith**: Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.

The Eucharistic Prayer concludes as the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ and says;

"Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever."

We respond: **Amen!** the congregation giving their assent to the prayer the priest has prayed in their name. **(Yes!! I agree!!)**

Up to and including the words of the Consecration, the Mass is a **Sacrifice**.

After the Consecration, the Mass is a **Banquet** and Communion is a celebration.

Next we pray together the **Our Father** the very words Jesus used to teach us how to pray.

Then we offer a **sign of peace**, (before we share in Communion together, we

express love, forgiveness, and peace to one another.)

Breaking of the Bread and Lamb of God

In the Old Testament, contracts were signed by dividing a bull in two and walking between the two halves. At Mass, the consecrated Host is broken in two -- a symbol of our covenant with God in which Jesus took our place when we had broken the covenant. The covenant said, "You will be my people, and I will be your God"

At the Last Supper, Jesus broke the bread before giving it to the disciples. And we are told that after the Resurrection, the disciples on the road to Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

The consecrated Host broken at Mass is symbolic of the broken body of Christ on the cross. But, as the priest takes a small piece of the Eucharist and drops it into the Chalice, the co-mingling of the Body and Blood of Christ, now joined together, symbolizes Jesus' Resurrection.

While the bread is being broken, we pray for the **Lamb of God** to take away the sins of the world, and to have mercy on us.

Who is the Lamb of God? It is Jesus, the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Also, we find in the Gospel, John the Baptist proclaiming: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world", when he saw Jesus approaching.

Next, the priest raises the Blessed Sacrament, presenting Jesus to us: "This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper."

We look up at Jesus in the Sacrament and say, "**Lord I am not worthy to receive you, only say the word and my soul will be healed.**"

These words are taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, recalling the words of the Roman centurion who sent his servant to summon Jesus to heal his slave. But before Jesus could arrive at the centurion's house, the man again sent his servants to deliver a message: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and let my servant be healed." (Jesus was very impressed with the centurion's faith, and the slave was healed.)

Receiving Communion

In his encyclical on the Eucharist, Pope John Paul II noted that, in Communion, not only do we receive the Lord, "but also that Christ receives each of us. He enters into friendship with us."

In Communion Jesus takes us into Himself. "We come to share in the divinity of Christ."

The Church wishes for all Catholics who attend Mass to receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion), but it is necessary that we examine our conscience to make sure we are truly prepared to receive Jesus.

- 1: that we are in a state of grace and not conscious of any unconfessed grave sin
- 2 that we have observed a one hour fast from food and drink (except for water or medicine) before receiving.

It is acceptable to receive the Host on your tongue or in your hand. The priest or EM will slightly elevate the Host and say, "Body of Christ".

We respond with AMEN (yes, I agree that Jesus is fully present under the appearance of this bread that we receive)

After receiving the Eucharist is the perfect time for silent prayer and intimate communion with Our Lord.

The Mass ends with the Concluding Rite which includes the **Priest's Blessing**

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the assembly, blessing us, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and then speaks the words of **Dismissal**:

"The Mass is ended, go in peace, to **LOVE** and **SERVE** the Lord."

Interestingly, from the Latin word "missa" comes the English word "dismiss". So, "Mass" means "dismissal". The celebration takes its name from the sending forth to love and serve the Lord that occurs at the end of every Mass.