

# Explanation Mass

## **1. AT THE BEGINNING OF MASS – BEFORE THE OPENING HYMN IS ANNOUNCED**

Good morning, welcome to [Sacred Heart/Our Lady's] and to our special Explanation Mass. In place of a homily today, there will be ten one-minute explanations of the Mass offered throughout the liturgy. Here is the first:

When entering and exiting the church, we are invited to bless ourselves with holy water, remembering that we were brought into the family of the Church through water in the Sacrament of Baptism. Before entering our pew, we genuflect – or kneel – toward the tabernacle, in order to reverence the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Moving over in our pew to allow others to join us is a kindness and sign of hospitality that is very much appreciated.

Full and active participation is central to the celebration of the Mass, so we are all encouraged to join in the singing and in the prayers.

## **2. AFTER THE OPENING GREETING BY THE PRIEST**

We make the Sign of the Cross twice during the Mass: at the beginning and at the final blessing. The Sign of the Cross is a reminder of Christ's death on the cross for us and a reminder of our belief in the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Mass is composed of three minor and two major parts. We are now in one of the minor parts, called the Introductory Rite. In the Introductory Rite, we are gathered together as a community in God's presence, and we get ready to give full attention to God's Word.

We ask for God's mercy in the Penitential Rite. When we recite or sing the "Lord Have Mercy" or "Kyrie", both the titles "Christ" and "Lord" refer to Jesus.

In the "Gloria" or "Glory to God", we give praise and honor to God. Some of the words we say or sing are the very same words that the angels proclaimed to the shepherds on the first Christmas when Jesus was born.

### **3. AFTER THE COLLECT (OPENING PRAYER) AND BEFORE THE FIRST READING**

We now begin the first of the two major parts of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word. While Jesus is supremely present in the Eucharist, He is also present in the priest-presider, in the assembly – that’s you and me, and in the words of Scripture as they are proclaimed at Mass.

The readings that we hear on Sundays are on a three-year cycle. The theme of the First Reading usually matches the theme of the Gospel, while the Second Reading often does not. The First Reading is from the Old Testament - except during the Easter Season, when it is from the Acts of the Apostles. After the First Reading, we sing a Psalm, an ancient prayer traditionally attributed to King David. The Psalms are prayers that Jesus himself would have known and prayed! The Second Reading is taken from one of the letters of the apostles, Jesus’ first and closest followers. The apostles were often writing to communities that they had already visited, helping them understand how to live as followers of Jesus.

### **4. AFTER THE SECOND READING AND BEFORE THE ALLELUIA**

Before the Gospel, in all seasons but Lent, we sing the word “Alleluia,” which is Hebrew for “praise the Lord.” Also before the Gospel, with our thumb, we trace the Sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips, and heart. It’s a way of saying that we want the words of the Gospel to be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. We stand up for the Gospel, because it is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, telling about the actions and words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

### **5. AFTER THE GOSPEL AND BEFORE THE CREED**

After the Gospel, the priest gives a homily to help us personally encounter Jesus and apply the Word of God to our lives. We recite the Creed together as one community of faith, stating all the things that we believe. We are asked to bow as we say the words “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayers of the Faithful, when we ask God for things that we need in our parish, our Church, our community, our nation, and our entire world.

## **6. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

We now are in the Preparation Rite, one of the minor parts of Mass. Here, we get ready for the second major part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Members of our community bring forward the offerings of the community: the bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Christ. A collection is taken up, and the money contributed will be used for the needs of the poor and to make possible all the various ministries and activities in the parish.

The priest will add a drop of water to the chalice, as a symbolic reminder that Christ humbled himself to become human like us, so that we might share in his divinity. When the priest's hands are washed, it's a reminder that all of us were washed clean of sin in the waters of baptism.

## **7. BEFORE THE PREFACE THREE-PART DIALOGUE (The Lord be with you, lift up your hearts etc.)**

We now begin the second major part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After the upcoming three-part dialogue between the priest and the congregation, a "preface-prayer", chosen to fit the season or feast being celebrated, is prayed by the priest. Next, we sing together the "Holy Holy Holy". The words "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest" are the same words said by the crowds as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Next is the longer section of the Eucharistic Prayer. There are multiple Eucharistic Prayer texts to choose from depending on the day or season. The high point of the entire Eucharistic Prayer are the words of institution, the words said by Jesus at the Last Supper. However, it is the entire prayer, not just the words of institution, that change what was bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. We kneel for this prayer because it is the most holy part of Mass.

It's important to remember that the same love that Jesus had in giving His Body and Blood for us on the cross is again shared with us here in this church at every Mass.

At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the "Great Amen" is sung by all, as a way of affirming or saying "yes, we believe" to everything that has been prayed for.

## **8. AFTER THE GREAT AMEN**

The Our Father, the prayers that follow, and the Sign of Peace are meant to help us get ready to receive Jesus, who is really and truly present in Holy Communion.

After the Sign of Peace, an important action takes place: the priest breaks the one large host into many smaller pieces, which reminds us that, even though we are many, we are one body in Christ. We sing the “Lamb of God” while that is taking place.

## **9. AFTER THE LAMB OF GOD**

When receiving the Eucharist, we usually have the option of receiving both the Body and the Blood of Christ, and that is encouraged because Jesus told us, “Eat my flesh; drink my blood.” Our faith tells us, though, that Jesus is fully present in the smallest crumb and tiniest drop.

As a sign of reverence or respect, we are asked to make a slight bow when we receive Holy Communion. It happens like this:

The minister holds up the host, we bow, the minister says, “The Body of Christ,” we respond “Amen,” the minister places the host on our hand or tongue, and we eat it right away, before we go back to our seats.

For those who choose to receive a blessing instead of receiving Holy Communion, the signal is to cross both arms over your chest. During the distribution of communion, everyone is encouraged to sing the Communion Hymn. A short period of silent prayer is observed after Communion. During this time, we can say thank you to Jesus for being so close to us in the Eucharist and we can ask Jesus for any help we need. “The Liturgy of the Eucharist” concludes with the Prayer after Communion.

## **10. AFTER THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

The Mass ends with the final minor rite, the Concluding Rite. Often announcements are shared so that all may share in the communal life of the parish. At the final blessing, sometimes there are special solemn blessings, in one or three parts. The response to each of these is “Amen”. After the blessing, we are sent forth with words that tell us our mission as we leave Mass, words like “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life”, to which we respond, “Thanks be to God”. We are all encouraged to sing the recessional hymn as we go forth to share the love of Jesus with the world!