

Catholic Basics Questions (and Answers)
from "Praying the Mass" February 2, 2023

I would like to learn more about the traditions done during Mass, such as crossing forehead and mouth before the Gospel.

You can find a good primer at <https://www.stapostle.org/explore-faith/postures-and-gestures-during-mass/>

As for the action before the Gospel, it is intended to pray "May the Lord be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart." What a beautiful way to prepare to hear the Gospel.

Can you explain the different parts we do and say in Mass and the songs between readings?

Here are some good resources to help understand more about the parts of Mass, including variations for special masses:

- If you prefer an app, you can download Universalis and we can show you how to follow along with Mass.
- It's also helpful to spend some time with the front of the Missal (in the pews) which will cover the most-often used Eucharistic Prayers and the typical Order of Mass. We can show you how to follow along if you'd like.
- A good overview of the standard Order of Mass, including responses, can be found at <https://universalis.com/static/mass/orderofmass.htm> . You can click on the grey bars with blue text to change the selection to get a feel of different Prefaces, Eucharistic Prayers, etc. while seeing how the responses largely stay the same.
- You can borrow a Missal from our pews here at church or buy a "Daily Missal" or a "Sunday Missal" locally at Divine Treasures (Catholic bookstore in Des Moines) or online if you prefer a book you can take with you to Mass but still keep at home.
- To better understand the songs between readings, known as the Psalms, you can spend time with the Book of Psalms in the Bible, with or without an accompanying study guide. One great way to do this is to look ahead to the next week's psalm and to pray with it several days in advance of Mass. Sometimes, you'll find that the Psalm is substituted, as allowed, for one that is similar in theme or references the Liturgical season. In that case, you may not hear the exact Psalm you prayed with, but the general "feel" should be similar.
- For a Mass to be a Mass, there are certain things that must always occur, including most of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. When celebrating a Mass with a combination of children and adults, little is changed, and this is considered a natural exposure to Catholics' primary prayer. (In such a combined Mass, you may see the youngest children dismissed as part of "Children's Liturgy of the Word" to give them a more

direct and interactive experience as the Priest or Deacon delivers a Homily that can then be more confidently directed at Adults and older children. If Masses are celebrated specifically for children, there are adjustments that can be made - often during the Liturgy of the Word (for example, a shorter homily written at the age level of the children present), or to the music or lack thereof.

- In all cases, it can be intimidating to “get it right” - trust in God’s love and patience and just attend Mass, which is the best way to learn to pray the Mass. God wants your presence - not your perfection. It’s okay if you haven’t memorized the responses - if you say them routinely at Mass, you will automatically get there. If you listen to the Psalms during Mass and meditate on the words, you will cover much ground in a year.