



# The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

## Etiquette for Holy Mass

Please remember the two fundamental principles upon which our behavior and attitudes in church rest:

**The church is a sacred space! It is the “Lord’s house” where we come to worship God together.**

**Mass is a holy and sacred act! It is during the Mass when all the graces and merits of our Lord’s sacrifice are applied to our souls in a sacramental fashion. If you keep these two principles in mind, all the following points of Mass etiquette will make perfect sense.**

Please dress appropriately. We should dress for Mass as if a King had invited us to a wedding feast, for that is what Mass truly is. Jesus, our King, is the groom and we are his bride. Who would show up to a wedding improperly dressed? Therefore, we should wear our best for the Lord.

Please arrive to Mass punctually. It is a good idea to arrive at Mass on time in order to participate in the entire liturgy. After finding your seat, take the opportunity to review the Bible readings, prepare yourself in prayer, or reflect on what you wish to bring to Jesus during the Mass. Arriving on time is also respectful to other parishioners because it prevents distractions once Mass has begun.

Please turn off your devices. this includes cell-phones, pagers, or anything else that rings, beeps, or buzzes.

Please do not bring any food, drink, or gum into the church.

Please reverently genuflect towards the tabernacle before sitting down. We do this to show respect to Jesus, our crucified King, who is present body, blood, soul and divinity in the hosts that are preserved in the tabernacle.



Please stay until the end of Mass. Mass ends when Father gives the final blessing then says, “The Mass is ended, go in peace” and we say: “Thanks be to God.” The final blessing is very powerful and will aid and protect you throughout the week. You are encouraged to stay and sing the final recessional hymn as well. Attending Mass in its entirety from beginning to end will give you a fuller, richer experience than leaving right away.

Please exit the church reverently and respectfully. Again, this is to show respect to other parishioners and our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. There is a custom where some people stay several minutes after Mass in

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thanksgiving for the Eucharist they have just received. You are encouraged to do the same.

The manner in which we approach the altar for Holy Communion is founded on the truth that the Eucharist is really and truly the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not just a symbol or representation! Because of this, we should approach communion with devotion, reverence, and respect. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when receiving communion:

## Etiquette for Holy Communion

**Fast for at least one hour before Mass:** It is customary to pray and fast before Mass in order to prepare ourselves for holy communion and to offer ourselves as a pure sacrifice to our Lord. (Water and medicine do not break a fast.)

**You must not be conscious of any grave sin:** It is seriously wrong to receive our Lord while in a state of grave (mortal) sin. Saint Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11:27 – 29 that, “whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself”. If someone is conscious of grave sin, they are asked to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving communion. In the meantime, one is encouraged to come up with their arms crossed over their chest for a blessing.

**Non-Catholics are kindly asked to abstain from receiving communion:** Holy Communion is a theologically powerful act in which we become intimately and profoundly united to God. It is the sign and cause of the complete unity of faith, life, and worship among Catholics. In order to receive Holy Communion, therefore, one would necessarily accept, believe and live according to the tenets of the Catholic faith. Non-Catholics naturally do not. It is for this reason that they are asked to abstain. However, if someone wishes to become Catholic, he/she is warmly invited to participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) to be formally and publicly received into the Church at Easter. Communion would be, therefore, the culmination and goal of this journey of conversion. In the meantime, non-Catholics are greatly encouraged to come up with their arms crossed over their chest for a blessing. (Please refer to the inside cover of the missal for the United States Bishops’ statement on Holy Communion.)

**Receive communion with reverence and devotion:** Before approaching the priest or Extraordinary Minister of Communion, make a reverential bow in respect to our Eucharistic Lord. When they say either “the body of Christ” or “the blood of Christ”, your response should only be “Amen”. This word means, “So be it”, “It is so”, or “I believe”. Please say it clearly and distinctly. You can receive Holy Communion either on the tongue or in

the hands. If you choose to receive in the hands, place your right hand over your left (in the shape of a little throne to receive the King of kings). You must consume the host immediately. It is forbidden to give the host to children who have not made their first communion or to take the host out of the church.

If you require more information on why it is essential to be in a state of grace in order to receive communion, please do not hesitate to speak to a member of the clergy (priest or deacon).

Thank you for respecting and honoring these guidelines as set forth by the Congregation of Divine Worship in Rome as well as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. By doing so, you will help to protect and promote the sanctity of the Holy Mass whenever it is celebrated. More importantly, you will cultivate a greater spirit of devotion and reverence for the Eucharistic Lord within your own soul. God bless you!

*Content written by Rev. Paul D. Montminy, Pastor of St. Catherine of Siena in Manchester, New Hampshire*

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

No one should be moving around during the following times:

- When the lector is reading the First and Second Readings from Scripture;
  - When the priest or deacon is reading the Gospel;
  - When the priest or deacon is giving the homily;
  - When the priest is saying the words of Consecration, changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ (during the Eucharistic prayer between the Holy, Holy, Holy and the Great Amen).
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- The exception to the above would be if someone is ill or has a crying baby who is distracting others.
  - If you or your child leaves church and re-enters during one of these times, you should remain standing at the back until these parts are over. The ushers have been instructed to ask people who are entering at these times to stand and wait at the back to be seated.
  - The narthex is for parents who are more relaxed about their children's behavior during Mass. The Special Events Room is for parents who are able to keep their children relatively quiet during Mass. These rooms are for latecomers and others who need it.
  - There are restrooms in the east hallway and in the Special Events Room.
  - Please remain in your pew until the final song ends. Exiting beforehand is like being asked to dinner and leaving before the dessert is served