

The Order of Mass

A. An overview of the Mass:

1. The Gathering or Introductory Rite, which consists of:

- the Entrance song and procession;
- the Sign of the Cross;
- the Greeting;
- the Penitential rite;
- the Gloria (only on Sundays and feast days, and not in Advent nor Lent);
- the Collect (Opening Prayer).

2. The Liturgy of the Word, which consists of:

- the First Reading;
- the Responsorial Psalm;
- the Second Reading (only on Sundays and feast days);
- the Gospel Acclamation;
- the Gospel;
- the Homily;
- the Creed (only on Sundays and feast days);
- the Prayer of the Faithful (also called the 'Universal Prayer of the Church'; 'Intercessions' or 'Bidding Prayer').

3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist, which consists of:

- the Presentation of the Gifts (sometimes called the Offertory);
 - *a Collection may be taken before, during or after the Presentation of the Gifts;*
- the Eucharistic Prayer, which consists of;
 - the Preface;
 - the Sanctus/'Holy Holy';
 - the Thanksgiving;
 - the Invocation of the Holy Spirit/ First Epiclesis;
 - the Institution Narrative/Account of the Last Supper;
 - the Memorial Acclamation;
 - the Remembering/Anamnesis;
 - the Second Epiclesis;
 - the Intercession;
 - the Doxology;
 - the Great Amen.
- the Communion Rite, which consists of:
 - the Lord's Prayer;
 - the Sign of Peace;
 - the Fraction Rite/Breaking of the Bread;
 - the Lamb of God;
 - 'Lord, I am not worthy'
 - a time to receive Holy Communion or a Blessing
 - a time of quiet reflection or a hymn;
 - the Prayer after Communion.

4. The Concluding Rite, which consists of:

- The Blessing;
- The Dismissal;
- The priest and altar servers processing away from the sanctuary
- *In practice it tends also to include any parish notices.*

B. Responses and Prayers in Mass

The Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales has produced some **Order of Mass leaflets** which include the responses said or sung by the congregation during Mass. These are available to download at <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Missal/Text/> . (Do note the different options which depend upon if you want the full text, which Creed you want, or the Order for weekday Mass).

The responses and prayers in Mass are fairly standardised but you will notice that these change during the year and from year to year, especially during Advent (the weeks leading up to Christmas) and Lent (the weeks leading up to Easter). The text below outlines the sections which may vary.

1. The Introductory Rites

The Mass begins with **the Greeting** in which the priest says one of three things:

- “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” or
- “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” or
- “The Lord be with you.”

to which the congregation replies “And with your Spirit.”

The **Penitential Rite** can take several forms:

- The “I confess” prayer, or
- A call and response: “Have mercy on us, O Lord.” “**For we have sinned against you.**” “Show us, O Lord, your mercy.” “**And grant us your salvation.**” or
- The *Kyrie Eleison*.

There are differences between Sunday Masses and weekday Masses. Masses that take place ‘during the week’ (meaning those which are not on a Saturday evening or a Sunday, and not on feast days during the week) do not usually include the **Gloria**. That is only said or sung on Sundays and feast days. Also, the **Gloria** is not said or sung during Advent and Lent.

The Introductory Rites conclude with includes the **Collect** (Opening/gathering prayer). Each day of the year has its own Collect. The same is true for two prayers later in the Mass: the *Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer*, and the *Prayer after Communion*.

2. The Liturgy of the Word

There are other differences between Sunday Masses and weekday Masses. Masses on feast days and Sundays always have a First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading and then the Gospel. Weekday Masses usually only have only one Reading, followed by a Psalm and then the Gospel.

There is always a **Gospel Acclamation** before the Gospel is read in Mass, but its words are different during Lent. Usually this takes the form of the congregation singing or saying “Alleluia” then a Bible verse (also specified by the Church) is said or sung, and then everyone sings or says “Alleluia” again. However, during Lent, “Alleluia” is not said/sung, but another response is used, such as:

- “Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!” or
- “Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!” or
- “Glory and praise to you, O Christ!” or
- “Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!”

The Readings, Psalm and Gospel readings are specified by the Church for each day, (and the most important of these is the Gospel reading). The readings for Sundays and feast days are on a three-year cycle – Year A’s Gospel readings mainly come from Matthew’s Gospel, Year B’s Gospel readings mainly come from Mark’s Gospel, and Year C’s Gospel readings mainly come from John’s Gospel.

The Readings for weekday Masses are on a separate two-year cycle, simply called Year 1 and Year 2.

There is a useful website called *Universalis* (<https://universalis.com/mass.htm>) which shows the First, Second and Gospel readings plus the Psalm in English for Mass that day and for the forthcoming week. You can pay a one-off subscription which gives you access to the *Universalis* app, which contains the readings for the whole year and beyond (see <https://universalis.com/n-app-windows.htm>). The app also contains an online “Order of Mass”.

The Creed is usually only said or sung on Sundays and feast days (not in weekday Masses). It can take one of three forms in Mass:

- The Apostles’ Creed;
- The Nicene Creed (officially this is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed);
- a form of the Baptismal Promises (though this is less commonly used than the two Creeds).

3. *The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

During the **Prayers of the Faithful** the congregation respond to each separate petition with a standard ‘call and response’. Two very common ‘call and response’ combinations are:

- “Lord, in your mercy” and the congregation replies: “Hear our prayer.” or
- “Lord, hear us” and the congregation replies: “Lord, graciously hear us.”

There are four different **Eucharistic Prayers** (simply numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4) which are used (as well as some others used for particular contexts).

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest introduces the **Memorial Acclamation** by saying “The mystery of faith.” The congregation response by saying or singing one of these three Acclamations:

- “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.” or
- “When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.”
or
- “Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free”.

4. *The Concluding Rites*

The Mass always concludes with **The Dismissal**, in which the priest says one of the following:

- “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” or
- “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” or
- “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” or
- “Go in peace”

to which the congregation replies: “Thanks be to God.”