

A teacher's guide to **The Mass**

What is it?

The Mass is the memorial of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus.

The celebration of Mass, an action of Christ and his people, is the centre of the whole of Christian life for the Church, and for each individual Christian.

The Mass is given to us

The Mass is a central part of the Tradition of the Church, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, and handed on down the generations. The Mass is a given. Our task is to learn how to celebrate it faithfully and well, so that it might be fruitful in our lives.

The Mass is celebrated by the whole Church

The Mass is for the whole assembly to celebrate. A celebration of Mass should always be prepared so that it will lead those taking part to conscious, full and active participation. Participation that fosters the virtues of faith hope and charity is what is expected because of what we celebrate, but also because, through our baptism we all share in the priesthood of Christ.

One implication of this is that in the worship of the Church, priests and other ministers don't do the Mass for us, we do it together. They have their vital role, and without an ordained priest, for example, we cannot celebrate the Mass. But each one present has a role to play, and principal amongst the roles of the ministers is to help them to fulfil that role.

We need help to celebrate well

The work of celebration needs constant support so that all of those taking part - ministers and others - are helped to know what they are to do and how to do it. Attention to the internals of participation are at least as important as attention to the externals.

What is given to us?

1. The structure of the Mass.

It is a simple and dynamic structure.

- Gathering and Introductory rites
- Liturgy of the Word
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Blessing and dismissal/going forth

If we work with the structure it will help our celebration. If we work against it, the nature of the Mass as ritual is compromised and participants are disempowered in the present celebration and not helped for participation in the future.

2. The prayers and readings of the Mass

These are found in the Lectionary and the Missal. Texts for each day of the year and texts for special occasions are provided. We are invited to make appropriate selection, rather than to make up our own prayers.

The Catholic tradition is a liturgical tradition, where given prayers and readings matter. When the prayers and readings are not easy to understand on first encounter - and for children that will probably mean most of our readings and prayers - those responsible for Catholic education and for worship need to help the children understand them, and to do this especially before the celebration itself.

3. The symbols of the Mass

The Mass is God communicating with us through Sacrament (a symbol that signifies what it effects). If Sacraments don't signify, their ability to effect, or to 'work', is greatly compromised.

Gathering, Listening and Responding; Giving Thanks, Eating and Drinking and leaving to live as Christ are not simply things we go through the motions of doing. They need to be purposeful and significant. Again, this needs to be learnt by everyone taking part if, together we are to do **what is necessary**.

A worksheet for RE coordinator/ Liturgy organiser

The Mass

Preparing for Mass

This is not difficult to do, but like everything else it does require particular skills.

It is very helpful for the person with overall responsibility for the Mass to become

- Familiar with the Missal
- Familiar with the Lectionary
- Familiar with the priorities and principles regarding music at Mass
- Familiar with the Church's expectations of readers, servers, etc

You do not have to be THE expert on all of these things. Normally you should expect your role to be more of a coordinating role, as you draw on the expertise of others (who may, for example, select music, train readers, write the texts for the Prayer of the Faithful.)

But you ARE the person who has been given responsibility for ensuring the suitability and quality of the celebration. So you need to have a understanding of the basics.

Indeed sometimes you will have to 'train the experts' because, for example simply because someone is a skilled musician doesn't necessarily mean they have an understanding of the expectations of music at Mass. You may also find yourself dealing with someone familiar with what was common practice at Mass, but not familiar with the expectations proper to the revised Mass. Good luck!

The various sheets in this set remind of the basics. And they also include worksheets for use preparing for each celebration, which will help your co-workers to give you their proposals in the form you need them, and facilitate your review of those proposals.

To take things further, once you have the basics in place, have a look at *Celebrating the Mass*, and the *Directory for Masses with children*

Suggested initial stages of Preparation

- **Occasion for the celebration:**

Eg start of School year

- **Date/time of celebration**

- **Liturgical Day**

Consult Liturgical Calendar in diocesan year book to see what liturgical day this is

- **'Restrictions'**

1. Are there proper readings or prayers the Church requires us to use this day?

2. If a ferial day are readings of the day suitable?

If not, select from those set for Various Needs and Occasions, or Commons

- **If there are no calendar restrictions what options seem attractive for**

1. Collect; Prayer over the Offerings, Prayer after Communion

Eg Proper of Ordinary time or Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions

2. Eucharistic Prayer

Which seem most suitable from EPs I-IV, EPs for Various Needs and Occasions; for Reconciliation; for Masses with Children?

Once you have these basics in place, complete the following master sheet and the worksheets you will pass to your collaborators. Allow enough time for them to give proper attention to their work, and for you to get back to them if there are things that need adjusting.

Date:	Liturgical Day:	
Reason for celebration:		
Priest:		
The Introductory Rites		Page number
Procession		
Entrance song/music		
Greeting		
Penitential Act		
(Gloria)		
Collect		
The Liturgy of the Word		
First Reading		
Psalm		
(Second Reading)		
Gospel Acclamation		
Gospel		
Homily		
(Creed)		
Prayer of the Faithful		
The Liturgy of the Eucharist		
Presentation of Gifts		
Offertory Song		
Prayer over the Offerings		
Preface		
Sanctus		
Eucharistic Prayer		
Memorial Acclamation		
Great Amen		
Communion Rite		
Lord's Prayer		
Lamb of God		
<i>Mode of distribution of Holy Communion</i>		
Song(s)/Music during Holy Communion		
Song after Holy Communion - optional		
Prayer after Communion		
The Concluding Rites		
Blessing		
Dismissal		
Concluding Music/Song		

Preparation of worship space Coordinator	
Music Coordinator	
Readers Coordinator	
Servers Coordinator	
Holy Communion Coordinator	