

MASS OF EXPLANATION
C: Commentator to read all text
P: Priest

C: The Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Mass, has been shaped by many factors over our 2000 years. The Church is in constant dialogue with God, meditating on the sacred mysteries of the Mass, trying to articulate these Divine mysteries, and at the same time is in dialogue with the world.

In this presentation, much emphasis will be upon the influences of the Passover celebration, the Last Supper and the Jewish elements of the Mass, the history of the Early Church and then later elements as the Church developed in the Middle Ages.

The word “Mass” comes from the final proclamation at Mass-
In simple terms, You are dismissed go in peace.
Dismiss --- Miss -- Mass

The word “Eucharist” is an even more ancient word.
In the Greek language, the second language used by the Church after Aramaic, Eucharist literally means “Thanksgiving”

C: THE SURROUNDS AND SETTINGS OF THE MASS

The Mass is made up of two parts –
the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
Therefore we see that the pulpit, the place of the Word of God
and the Altar, the place of sacrifice are central.

The Altar ~ In the Old Testament Abraham’s faith was challenged as he led his Son Isaac to be sacrificed *on the altar*.
The altar of Sacrifice was also central in the magnificent *Temple* of Jerusalem.
Here the High Priest would offer sacrifice in thanksgiving and reparation for sins.
Our Altar of Sacrifice makes real again the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus.

This idea of Sacrifice has only been preserved within the Catholic and Orthodox Church and only lately being re-explored within the Protestant denominations who initially rejected the Eucharistic idea of Sacrifice.

It is interesting to remark that in the New Testament the Christian *priest* at Mass was never called "*priest*" because if the Jewish-Christians ever spoke of a Priest it would have been the Jewish *High Priest* at the Temple. The Christians therefore called their Priests titles as Elder, Presiders and Presbyter.

Likewise, the *Altar* was the Altar of Sacrifice in the *Temple* and not the altar of the Mass in the homes of the Christians. Only later when the Christians were expelled from the Jewish Synagogues in 70 A.D. were these terms attached to the Christian faith and Mass – with its altar and priest.

The altar also represents the *table of the Last Supper*...the table at which Jesus broke the Passover bread and shared the cup as the disciples reclined as they ate and celebrated this holy Jewish meal. To eat and share at table was the greatest sign of unity and to be asked to join in at the table meant a profound unity. This altar is the *Table of the Lord* and we are invited to joining Him *and one another at the table*, and so the Mass is never a personal prayer, but a public one at the table.

The use and position of the altar developed within the catacombs of the Early Church. Just as St. Peter was crucified and St. Paul was beheaded, many Christians were tortured and killed for their faith in the early centuries. To protect themselves, they would gather together in the catacombs under the city of Rome. These were miles of tunnels that were used as the burial site for the city. The coffins would be stacked in the walls, giving rise to our modern Mausoleums or placed on the ground. As Christians gathered for Mass it was natural to celebrate Mass on top of the coffins of the Christians. Thus the *shape and style of the Altar is similar to the shape of the coffins of the catacombs*. This is why we often see Christian symbols on the front of the altar as Christian symbols would have decorated the early coffins and walls.

We also see in our sanctuary things as candles and the use of incense. We no longer need candles for practical purposes, but in respect for the early Christians who *had to use candles* in the dark dingy catacombs, we continue to use them. We also remember that Christ is the Light of the World.

C: THE CLOTHING OF THE PRIEST AT MASS

Dating back to the Early Church, we know that the presbyters or elders (the priests) would wear the clothing of the time. Initially they did not wear any special clothing as Eucharist was celebrated in the context of the communal breaking of bread, as the Bible explains, with the presbyter leading the Eucharist in homes. Thus the clothing that they would wear would be a *white toga*, the clothing of the Roman Empire. This is why the *Alb* of today remains white in colour and draped as a 1st century toga would be. The world alb is derived from the Latin word for white. **PAUSE FOR FATHER TO DRESS**

Traditionally under or over the chasuble is the priest's *stole*, the long scarf-like vestment. This originated out of the *prayer shawl or the Kalif* of the Jewish people. Each time prayers are offered, the prayer shawl is put on one's shoulders. **PAUSE FOR FATHER TO PUT ON KALIFF AND THEN THE STOLE**

As the Christians were forced into the cold wet catacombs, they experienced the dampness of the tunnels and as the ceilings dripped with moisture onto the sacred elements of the bread and wine, the Body and Blood, the Priest would guard the elements by draping a "*poncho-like*" *piece of clothing* over the altar. This is the modern *Chasuble* that remains open at the sleeves and falling loosely around the ground. The word Chasuble is derived from the Latin word for 'little house', *casa*, since it "housed" or protected the sacred elements. In later years, as a teaching method, the colours of the chasuble would change.

C: THE BACKGROUND OF THE MASS

Jesus celebrated the *Passover* with his disciples. It was the Last Supper that he was to share with them before His death. It was the Jewish celebration not only *remembering* but of *making real again* the Passing over of the angel of Death by the doors of the Israelites who marked their doors with the blood of the Lamb. It also marked the passing over of the Jewish people in their escape from Egypt to the Promised Land through the Red Sea .

This is celebrated by the Jewish people every year. Jesus as a faithful Jew gathered and celebrated this last Passover in the Upper room.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the early Church was left with this presence of Jesus Christ made real in the Eucharist. This belief in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus was always with us.

As Jews the early Christian believers would go to the Temple on Saturday and then on Sunday gather for the Breaking of the Bread, as often it is called, or the Mass.

The structure of the Mass – *what was it to be???*

The only means of worship that they knew was the ***Temple worship*** reserved for the ***High Priest***. Other than the Temple worship the prayer of the Jewish disciples would have been that of the Passover, Jesus' last meal of the Last Supper.

As ***non-High Priests*** they would therefore gather in their homes to share the consecrated bread and wine, Body and Blood of Christ – the one loaf and one cup. Prayers of Thanksgiving and petition would be offered, as was their Jewish practice in prayer.

This then is our heritage...let us bring our celebration.

PRIEST : Please Stand

C: Music has always been a vital part of the church.....

To show our respect for the Eucharist and our wanting to be here in praise we try our best to join in the singing. *Otherwise it is not the celebration it should and can be.* Even in the early church when there was the threat of death some music was included. This is why it is vital *not to be late for Mass* – Certainly to respect fellow parishioners at Mass here and now but also to honour our ancestors who arrived and celebrated Mass under great danger every week.

PRIEST: Please join in our gathering hymn

CHOIR: OPENING HYMN

C: The first thing that the Priest does is to kiss the Altar PAUSE

This is a sign of reverence for the Sacrificial Altar, for Christ will soon be present on it. This also dates back to the catacombs when the kiss showed respect for the deceased Christian *buried within the coffin.* The relic, the bone of the Saint embedded within the Altar links us to this tradition.

C: Right away we mark our bodies with the sign of the cross

P: IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

C: When we were baptized as children, it was the first action done to us and if we are anointed at the end of life, it is to be the last sign traced upon our heads.

It is the singular Christian symbol and means of our salvation.

The *sign of the Cross* is the way we also begin and end our prayer and should only be done during Mass twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of Mass, beginning and ending our prayer of the Mass.

C: The Penitential rite. Right at the beginning of the Mass we confess our need for reconciliation with God and one another. This can have three forms.....

The first “I confess” The second. “Lord have mercy”

And the third the sprinkling of holy water.

It is the priest’s choice of which to pray.

The Confitor is the first option

and reminds us of what we have both done and failed to do.

The second option of the *Lord Have Mercy... Christ have mercy* actually began as a *litany of praise*, thanking God for His mercy and coming to be with us.

Often the list of intercession for mercy would go *on and on and on*.

This would *not happen* in the early Church of the catacombs

where time was of the essence, but in later years after the persecutions.

The third option of the sprinkling of the Holy Water is usually done at Easter.

P: I CONFESS +++++++

**MAY ALMIGHTY GOD HAVE MERCY ON US FORGIVE US OUR SINS
AND BRING US TO EVERYLASTING LIFE+**

CHOIR: LORD HAVE MERCY WAIT FOR GLORIA !

C: The Gloria is the song of the Christmas Angels.

It is meant to be sung as the angels would have sung it.

The first part is the song of the angels.

The second part is taken from a prayer of the early Church fathers.

It is only to be said on Sundays and major Feast Days.

It is also never prayed on Sundays in Lent or Advent

marking the serious tone of these seasons.

CHOIR : GLORY TO GOD.....

P: OPENING PRAYER

C: The Liturgy of the Word.

For the first three readings we sit, marking a difference to the Gospel.

The *first reading* is always taken from the *Old Testament* or during Easter Season from the Acts of the Apostles

It reminds us of our Scriptural link to the Jewish people and the beginnings of the history of our salvation.

The first reading is always chosen in line *with the Gospel* in order to reflect the same message.

LECTOR – FIRST READING WAIT FOR PSALM

C: The Psalm. The *Psalms* are *Jewish songs* of praise and thanksgiving but most often of lamentation and heartache, returning back to the Lord. They help us to recall that pain and outcry of the people, words still true to this day. They are meant to be sung, as they would have been sung in the Jewish Service. They are also called “*Responsorial*” Psalms in that they are a response to the first reading, both being from the Old Testament.

CHOIR OR LECTOR : PSALM

C: The second reading is always taken from the Letters of St. Paul or the other writers as St. James or St. Timothy. They usually follow in order, chapter by chapter with no real connection to the Gospel.

LECTOR : SECOND READING

CHOIR – WAIT FOR GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

C: The Gospel. In the early Church they most likely did not stand for the readings of Christ’s life and teachings but in respect and to show the difference to the other readings Christians begin to stand for the Lord’s Good News. The Gospels are in a three year cycle...year A for Matthew, year B Mark, year C Luke. John is only used on special Feast Days and Easter. This allows us to go through the fullness of the Scriptures.

The *sign of the cross over the head, lips and heart* reminds us that we are to think, speak and love the Word of God. The Priest at the end always kisses the Bible in great reverence for God present in the Word.

The **homily** follows the Gospel. It has always been purposely *put here* to link the Liturgy of the *Word* and the Liturgy of the *Eucharist*. Thus every homily should make reference to both the Word just proclaimed and the Eucharist soon be made real again.

CHOIR: GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

P: GOSPEL/HOMILY

C: The Creed - There are two choices for the **Creed**- the Apostles creed and Nicene Creed. The first is named after the Apostles because it is one way we can call ourselves an *Apostolic Church*. The Apostles Creed also contains *twelve* articles of faith. This is the Creed that has always been used for baptisms and is the more ancient creed.

The Nicene Creed is that Creed of faith formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. when divisive teachings about Christ and the Trinity were being speculated upon.

In the *11th century* it was made part of the Mass by Pope Benedict 8th.

P: CREED

WAIT FOR PRAYER OF FAITHFUL EXPLANATION

C: The prayer of the faithful: since the times of the early church prayers of petition has been part of the Liturgy. This was true of *Jewish prayer* and worship and continued with the Eucharist celebrations of the Church. While the Bible readings speak of God's actions the Prayer of the Faithful speaks about *our prayers and actions*.

The traditional form is: -- Prayers for the Pope, for the Church, for the World, for the Community, for the sick and for the dead.

The response to each prayer –

Lord Hear Our Prayer- *can be changed* to any response.

The priest's opening and closing prayer is part of this *one prayer* and this is why these are not called the Prayer s of the Faithful but *Prayer* of the Faithful.

They are seen as one prayer.

P AND LECTOR : PRAYER OF FAITHFUL

CHOIR – WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH TO BEGIN THE OFFERTORY HYMN

C: DURING COLLECTION

The preparation of the gifts. At the Last Supper, in the early church and in the catacombs *there was no formal procession*. The gifts of wine and bread were simply there at table, on top of the coffin. When the persecutions ended there was more time and so processions before Mass, at the end of Mass and particularly at the Offertory became more and more elaborate including incensing.

The element of bread is again a natural sustenance of all peoples. Unleavened bread of Matzo is what Jesus used at the Last Supper and the Church has been, over the centuries, faithful to this unleaven-ness of the flat bread. In the early Church when those who participated were few it was easy to share the one bread, the loaf that St. Paul speaks about. Later numbers meant that smaller hosts had to be made.

The Prayers of Blessing are *right from* the Jewish ceremony of Passover..... Each blesses God as King of the Universe.....Blessed be God forever. Each is a prayer of thanks of Jews and Christians.

CHOIR: OFFERTORY HYMN

P: BLESSED ARE YOU LORDIT WILL BECOME FOR US THE BREAD OF LIFE. BLESSED BE GOD FOREVER.

C: As the priest mixes the water and wine, it certainly represents ourselves being intermingled in Christ and in His Blood. For just as you cannot see the water and wine separate, so too are we in Christ. This actually began as a practical matter, in that the wine used at Eucharist was always brought from one of the person's homes and was often too strong. The water lessened the bitterness of the wine.

P: BLESSED ARE YOU.....BLESSED BE GOD FOREVER.

C: The priest then washes his hands. Again, in many world religions the minister must purify themselves first. More specifically the washing of the hands of the priest came directly from the Passover celebration when the leader too washes their hands with a short Passover prayer modeled of on Psalm 51 – Lord wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

P: PRAY MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS
THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD

WAIT FOR EXPLANATION OF SANCTUS

C: What is known as the Preface now begins.

The *Sanctus* “**Holy , Holy, Holy** ” is taken from the song of the angels in Isaiah 63- as the prophet enters the room the angels, filled with God’s praises proclaim God as Holy, Holy, Holy. This was originally used as a *Jewish prayer of Kedish* or Blessing Prayer. The *second part of the prayer* - is from the Book of Revelation – Heaven and Earth are full of your glory and the last part – *blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord* is rooted in the Hosanna of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

P: THE LORD BE WITH YOU

CHOIR: -----HOLY HOLY

P: WAIT FOR EXPLANATION OF EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

C: The Eucharistic Prayers

There are presently 9 choices of Eucharist Prayers; the first four we often hear at Mass, two for Reconciliation and three for when children are present.

The *First Eucharist Prayer* called the *Roman Canon* dates back in part to the *4th century*. Some elements of the first Eucharistic Prayer are even older and its final form was directed by Pope Gregory the Great.

The *Second* Eucharistic prayer is from an ancient manuscript connected to a Roman Priest name Hippolytus. This manuscript was called The Apostolic Tradition and within it was an ancient Eucharistic Prayer *used at the consecration of a bishop in 215 AD* This is why we hear the sentence – “To stand in your presence to serve you”, referring to the Bishop being consecrated.

The *Third* Eucharistic Prayer is another ancient Western Prayer. The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer borrows heavily upon Eastern liturgies especially the Greek Liturgy. It is very scriptural giving us the full sweep of our biblical history. It is often associated with St. Basil from the 4th century.

All Eucharistic Prayers have the same elements in common:

All include the narrative or making real the Last Supper of Christ, with the priest speaking Jesus’ words – This is My Body- This is My Blood. All also include the invocation and sending of the Holy Spirit which occurs *twice* – once to change the bread and wine into Jesus’ Body and Blood and a *second time for unity* in the Church. It is only through the gift of the Spirit that unity and peace will come about. All also include prayers of petition --- for the Church, the Pope and Bishops, and for the dead; the calling on the Communion of the Saints and the final Doxology which concludes each prayer.

The People respond in what has been called THE GREAT AMEN – not half-heartedly but *in their yes* to all that the priest has prayed. In Hebrew – “so be it” – Amen , Yes !

P: Eucharistic Prayer

CHOIR: MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

P: ...FOREVER AND EVER .

CHOIR: AMEN

P: OUR FATHER UP TO SIGN OF PEACE ... THEN WAIT

C: The sign of Peace. As in the bible we follow the teaching of Jesus himself that before we approach the Altar we must be reconciled with one another in Matthew 5:23 and Mark 11:25. This is a powerful gesture in that it is *Christ's peace* that we offer to one another.

P: LORD JESUS CHRIST... PEACE .. LET US OFFER.....

CHOIR: WAIT FOR EXPLANATION OF AGNUS DEI

C: The Agnus Dei, the Lamb of God.

The priest first intermingles a small piece of the Body of Christ into the Blood of Christ – again some see this as ourselves in Christ or the coming together with Christ. This began in the *8th century*. PAUSE

We then begin the Lamb of God ... the words of John the Baptist who said there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The prayer began to be used in *Syria* and in its original form is in the Greek language.

CHOIR : LAMB OF GOD++++++

P: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

C: In the early Church and certainly at the Last Supper, it was the one loaf that was broken and shared showing the unity of all. Communicants in the early Church shared in the bread, breaking it and sharing it with their hands. Later the practice of communion on the tongue was introduced. The option of course exists so long as one receives reverently, in a state of grace. To receive in one manner or the other does not signal greater piety. If on the hand the Holy Communion **MUST BE PLACED IN ONE'S MOUTH IMMEDIATELY** – and not to irreverently walk away with the Communion. As the priest, deacon or Extra Ordinary Minister of Communion speaks the words – The Body of Christ. The communicant must answer – *amen* – for the word amen means “ I agree” in Hebrew , thus I AGREE. The Body of Christ – Amen !

CHOIR: COMMUNION HYMN

P: WAIT UNTIL FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH BEFORE PRAYER

C: Post Communion Prayer: As a prayer of communion this is to be prayed before the announcements and dismissal. *One also notices the shortness of the time between communion and the dismissal.* This again dates back to the time of the catacombs. As a persecuted Church, they would leave soon after the communion out of fear of the Romans. It is imperative *now* to remember that out of respect for Christ, the priest and the congregation we are asked to *remain IN OUR PEWS until the priest reaches the back of the Church* and the music concludes.

This marks the end of Mass. Or rather the beginning of the fruits of the Mass in the world through our discipleship.

P: CLOSING PRAYER

CHOIR: CLOSING HYMN