

UNDERSTANDING THE CATHOLIC MASS

(Researched and compiled by Bernie Ramis for the Roman Catholic Churches of Vernon)

Delivered on August 8 & 9, 2026

IV. Parts of the Mass - Introductory Rites

(Note: Due to time constraints, I will not go through every single part of the Mass. I highly recommend attending [Upon This Rock](#) for a deeper dive into the biblical roots of the Blessed Sacrament.)

There is this beautiful, repeating rhythm that flows through the Mass: First, we are **gathered and prepared**, then we are **given a gift**, and then we are **sent forth**.

This rhythm unfolds through two main movements – the **Liturgy of the Word** and the **Liturgy of the Eucharist** – bracketed by the **Introductory Rites** at the beginning and the **Concluding Rites** at the end.¹ All the prayers, all the symbols, all the rituals – they all come from scripture. Everything about the Mass is in the Bible!

We are gathered and prepared through the **Introductory Rites**.² And we start with the Sign of the Cross.³ There are two aspects to the sign of the cross.

1. **The words we recite.** When we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," we are invoking the name of our Trinitarian God. Throughout the Bible, men and women called on the name of God, to actively invite His living presence right into that moment.
2. **We trace the cross over our bodies.** Six hundred years before Christ, the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of God placing a spiritual mark on the foreheads of those who remained faithful. That mark was the Hebrew letter tau (+) which looks just like a cross! (Ezekiel 9:4, 6)

Immediately after the sign of the cross, the priest greets us: "*The Lord be with you.*" We respond: "*And with your spirit.*"⁴

In Scripture, "*The Lord be with you*" echoes the greeting given to people called to a mission!

- God said it to Moses before he confronted Pharaoh (Exodus 3:12).
- He said it to Joshua before leading Israel into battle (Joshua 1:5).
- And the Angel Gabriel spoke it to a young virgin from Nazareth when she was called to become the Mother of God! "*Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.*" (Luke 1:28)

When we reply, "*And with your spirit,*" we are acknowledging the grace of the Holy Spirit given to the priest at his ordination to lead us into these mysteries.

And now that we have been gathered, we are prepared through the **Confiteor** ("*I confess to almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters...*")⁵, we honestly admit our sins to God and to one another. Just like the tax collector in the Gospel of Luke, we humbly beat our breast in sorrow for our sins (Luke 18:13).

¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 3rd Ed., 28; also *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 1346.

² *GIRM*, 46.

³ *GIRM*, 124; also *CCC*, 2157.

⁴ *GIRM*, 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 51, 125.

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Immediately following our confession, we cry out: *"Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy."* Sometimes in Greek – *"Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison."*⁶

And now that we have humbled ourselves, confessed our sins, and cried out for the Lord's healing mercy, what happens next? When God pours out His unfathomable forgiveness on us, we can't just stay silent. How do we respond when we realize we've just been washed clean by the King of Kings?

We will unpack this at the next talk.

⁶ Ibid., 52.