

UNDERSTANDING THE CATHOLIC MASS

(Researched and compiled by Bernie Ramis for the Roman Catholic Churches of Vernon)
Delivered on August 29 & 30, 2026

VII. Parts of the Mass - Liturgy of the Eucharist (Part 2)

(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.)

Historically, priests offered Mass facing the tabernacle. There were no microphones, and the prayers were mostly solemnly whispered. People could not really hear nor see what was happening at the altar. So, they filled the silence with their own devotions like praying the rosary or a novena **during** the Mass. But then, a sudden, sharp ring of bells calls their attention to the miracle that is about to happen.¹ That sudden, sharp ring of bells serves the same purpose today. And through the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, we can now hear the words and see the liturgical actions of the **Eucharistic Prayer** – the prayer at the very heart of our Mass.²

One ring happens when Father **extends his hands over** our offerings of bread and wine, invoking the Holy Spirit³ to come down upon them **like the dewfall so that they may become the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ**. The priest then repeats Jesus' words at the Last Supper, known as the words of institution.⁴ Notice how Father prays the words **to the bread** "*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, ...*" and **to the chalice which he slightly tilts towards him**, "*Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood...*"

At each instance, when the bread is elevated, and then the wine is elevated, the bells **are rung three times**. The liturgical intent of the elevation and the ringing of the bell is to invite us to **look up at the raised host and chalice**, with awe and faith in our hearts. **Because at the saying of the words of institution**, the miracle of the transubstantiation occurs: the substance of bread and wine changes completely into the true Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ.⁵ This is the doctrine of the Real Presence.⁶

With the **Consecration** complete, the sacrifice on the altar invites us to prepare for **Communion**.

First, we pray or sing the Lord's Prayer or Our Father, asking for **our daily bread**.⁷ Again, we do this with hands down or folded in prayer, because the *orans* posture is reserved for priests.⁸

¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 3rd Ed., 150.

² *Ibid.*, 78.

³ *Ibid.*, 79c.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 79d; ; also *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 1353.

⁵ *CCC*, 1376.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1374.

⁷ *GIRM*, 81; also *CCC*, 2837.

⁸ *GIRM*, 237, 124, 152.

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Next, we extend the **Sign of Peace** to those who are around us. However, it is a gesture that we should not overdo⁹ so that it does not distract us from the important actions that happen next. Because as soon as we hear the words "*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world*" our eyes should go back to the altar to witness the switch from sacrifice to banquet. From Calvary to the Heavenly Feast.

Holding up the host and chalice, the priest echoes the words of St. John the Baptist: "**Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world...**"

And here's an important line that gives context to our Communion which we often miss: "**Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb**".¹⁰ These exact words come straight from the Book of Revelation (19:9): "Blessed are those who are invited to the **marriage** supper of the Lamb." It is the ultimate union between Christ (the Bridegroom) and the Church (His Bride).¹¹

Recognizing that this is a pure, undeserved invitation from God, we humbly respond using the words of the Roman Centurion in the Gospel of Matthew (8:8): "**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed**"

And then we proceed to the **Communion Procession**. Our movement up the aisle is not a catwalk, nor a line for mingling or socializing. It is a pilgrimage procession. Our focus remains on the Eucharist. It is a wedding procession. Our focus remains on our bridegroom.

Our interior disposition should match the magnitude of who we are about to encounter. [It is for the same encounter](#) why Modesty in our Attire is expected. Our outward appearance reflects our inward belief. Modest and respectful clothing is an act of reverence for the Real Presence and a courtesy to the community.¹²

For generations, the traditional guiding principle has been to wear our "Sunday Best." What that looks like will naturally vary for each person: For some, it might mean a suit, a tie, or a lovely dress. For others, a clean collared shirt, neat trousers, or a modest blouse. For a teenager, it might simply be their cleanest, nicest sweater or polo shirt.

The goal isn't luxury or high fashion, but rather intentionality—reserving attire with explicit graphic logos, gym wear, or overly casual clothes for other days of the week.

⁹ *GIRM*, 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹ *CCC*, 1602.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1387, 2521-2522.

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I fully recognize how warm our summer days can get, especially if you have outdoor activities, sports, or family gatherings planned right after Mass. Wanting to stay cool and comfortable is completely understandable, but we can still prioritize both comfort and reverence during Liturgy without resorting to sleeveless tops, tank tops, short shorts, or beach flip-flops. **A practical suggestion: Bring a change of clothes.** If you are heading straight to the beach, park, or a casual outing after Mass, feel free to bring your casual wear with you! You are more than welcome to utilize the church washrooms to change into your outdoors gear immediately following the Mass.

When you open your closet next Sunday, take a moment in prayer to reflect on the garment of your heart and body. Only you can honestly discern whether what you choose to wear is fitting for the heavenly wedding feast to which our Lord invites us (See [Matthew 22:11-13](#)). We are called to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. And to not be conformed to this world, but to what is good, and acceptable, and perfect (See [Romans 12:1-2](#)).

And do not leave the church immediately after receiving Communion. Stay a while.... Just a few more minutes. Sit in gratitude, and let the reality of what you have just received soak into your heart.

Then, the priest offers the **Prayer after Communion**, asking God that the grace of this sacrament will bear tangible fruit in our lives throughout the coming week.¹³

From there, we receive the **Final Blessing** and then the **Dismissal**.¹⁴ Historically, in Latin, the words used by the deacon or priest were "Ite, Missa est" —which literally means 'Go, you are sent.' or sometimes 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.' The Mass does not simply end; it commissions us. We leave with the mission of glorifying the Lord by the way we live our lives. When we respond, 'Thanks be to God,' we aren't just thanking Him that finally, Mass is over... we are giving thanks for the sending forth (*missio*) we've just received.¹⁵

Brothers and sisters, this is our wedding feast; our bridegroom awaits at the altar.¹⁶ This is our liturgy; where the Lord of life sustains us through the Living Bread come down from heaven.¹⁷ This is our worship; where the God of glory and Lord of love receives our joyful adoration.

Brothers and sisters, this is our Mass. **[END]**

¹³ *GIRM*, 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵ *CCC*, 1332.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1602; also Rev.19:7-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1355; also Jn.6:51.