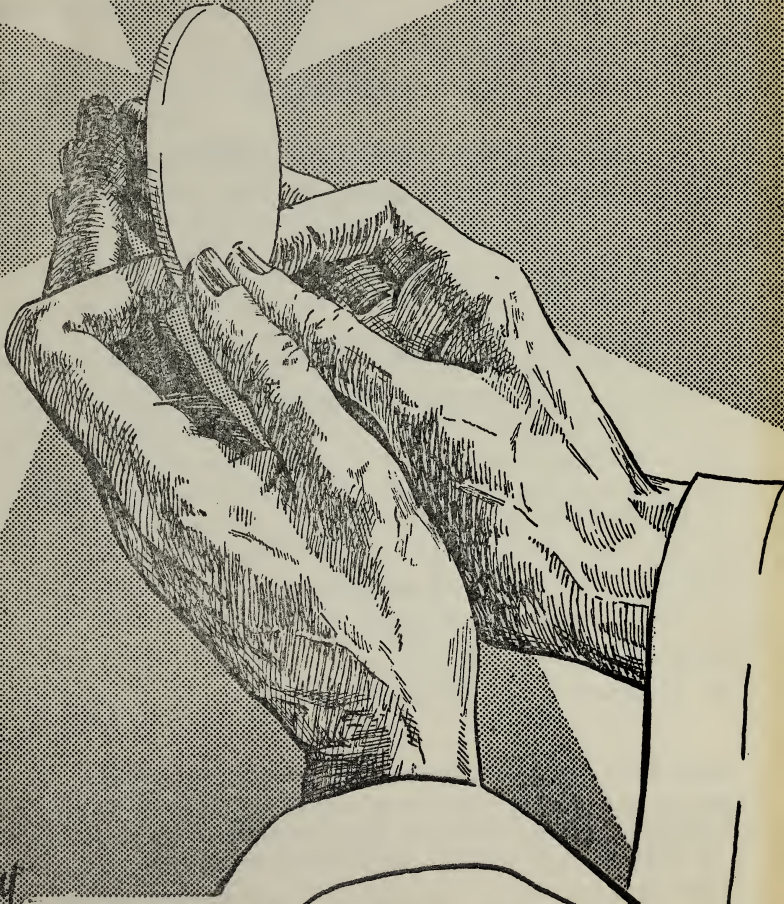


# THIS IS YOUR MASS

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This is your  
ADG 6218



By  
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*Imprimi potest*

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## INTRODUCTION

There is nothing that makes life more understandable—more charged with meaning and purpose—than the Mass. The Mass is the center of Catholic life. To offer Mass is the greatest act a human being can perform.

THIS IS YOUR MASS was first delivered at the Eastern Shrine of St. Therese, Englewood, N. J. It is here printed exactly as it was delivered.

The purpose of this explanation of the Mass is merely to suggest some interesting and helpful thoughts that will make the Mass come to life each Sunday, or perhaps, each day.

THIS IS YOUR MASS was first given as a spoken commentary on the Mass while the priest at the altar actually said the Sunday Mass. This explanation was most effective when the priest said Mass facing the people; a portable altar, placed at the altar railing, was used for this purpose. Those who heard this explanation urged its publication so that in every parish the booklet can be first read in the pulpit while Mass is being offered; the priest saying the Mass may be obliged to pace the prayers and actions of the Mass to fit the explanation being read by a fellow-priest in the pulpit. The members of the parish can then take the booklet with them to be read at home and during several subsequent Masses until they are fully aware of what is happening at the altar during Mass.

This booklet is not intended to be a substitute for the Missal; rather it should be an excellent preparation for an intelligent use of the Missal.

To understand the history and meaning of each part of the Mass is a long step toward a proper and living appreciation of this supreme act of the priest at the altar; the Mass begins to assume its proper importance in our Catholic life. Before long the Mass becomes the true high point of each day—and a day without the Mass is entirely pointless.

## I

### AS THE MASS BEGINS

We watch the priest come to the foot of the altar and see him dressed in what was the ordinary street dress of people living almost nineteen centuries ago. He wears a cross on his back to recall how Our Lord carried His cross for our sins, our own personal sins.

As the priest ascends the steps of the altar, we can picture to ourselves Our Lord struggling up the hill of Calvary on the first Good Friday. The priest places the chalice (a gold cup) on the altar and goes to the side of the altar to arrange the book from which he will read the prayers of the Mass. Many of the prayers in the Mass are taken from the Bible—remarkable proof for our critics of the respect Catholics have for the Bible.

Now going to the center of the altar, the priest pauses one moment, bows his head. He is recalling to mind the intention for which he is about to offer this Mass to God. The Mass may be offered for a deceased person, or for the health or some other intention of a living person.

The priest goes to the bottom of the altar steps and begins the Mass: **IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

### I Confess

The priest is now reciting the confession prayers—he is confessing to God, to the Blessed Mother, to the saints that he is a sinner, so unworthy to offer to God this sublime act of worship and praise. He is stunned, humbled, crushed by the enormity of his sins—he is bowed over in sorrow and shame as he confesses his sins. He is pleading that God overlook his unworthiness and allow him to offer the death of Our Lord on the cross once more for his own sins and the sins of everyone in the congregation.



As the priest bows down at the foot of the altar, we are reminded of Our Savior in the Garden of Olives—we can see the gentle Christ prostrate with the weight of the sins of all mankind as He reminds His Father: “Thy will, not Mine, be done.”

The altar boy, too, confesses that he and you, the people present at Mass, are sinners; that you are not worthy to be present at this highest act of worship. He too pleads, beseeches God for His merciful forgiveness. You, the people, should recite these confession prayers with the priest and altar boy.

### **After Forgiveness, A Kiss**

After confessing his guilt, the priest now takes new courage and stands erect. When the priest has ascended the altar steps, he bows over and kisses the altar at the spot where the relics of martyrs are encased in the altar stone. This is the symbolic kiss of peace and forgiveness between Our Lord and His people—the priest representing God’s people, and the relics of the martyrs representing the God from Whom they gave their lives.

### **Introit**

The priest now goes to the side of the altar and begins a prayer called the INTROIT. It is really an ENTRANCE prayer. This prayer originated in the very early centuries of the Church and was chanted or recited as the priest walked through the church on his way to the altar. Unlike our custom of coming to the altar from a side entrance to the sanctuary, the priest in the early centuries came in solemn procession through the church on his way to the altar.

This prayer reminds us of the entrance of Our Lord into the world on the first Christmas—the beginning of God’s plan to redeem, to save mankind from sin.

## Kyrie Eleison

The priest, once the entrance prayer has been finished, says something in Greek, one of the original languages used for the offering of Mass. The priest says: KYRIE ELEISON, etc.; it means "Lord have mercy on us."

Originally this prayer was said on the way to the church. The first Christians made it a practice to gather at some point a short distance from the church and to walk in procession to the church for the offering of Mass. As the faithful marched in procession, they chanted the Litany of the Saints; today all that remains of the practice is the KYRIE ELEISON.

We are reminded by this prayer of the reason why Our Lord came into this world—to show His mercy to sinners. "Lord have mercy on us."

## Glory to God

Now the priest, standing at the center of the altar, says: "Glory to God in the highest." This is part of the hymn sung by the angels on Christmas night. Originally it was recited only in Masses offered on Christmas day; now it is said in almost every Mass. It is not said, however, in Masses for the dead.

Following our fervent plea for mercy in the KYRIE ELEISON, we are compelled to proclaim to the four corners of the world the glories of the Merciful God. In our exuberance we use the words of angels to sing the praises of God—*Gloria in Excelsis Deo.*"

## Collect

Turning to the people and extending his hands, the priest now speaks a greeting to the congregation. He says "*Dominus Vobiscum*" meaning "The Lord be with you." Today Christian people use similar expressions: "God be with you; God protect you" is often heard in lands where Faith flourishes.

Returning to the book at the side of the altar, the priest now invites the faithful to say with him a prayer called the COLLECT. Notice the hands of the priest as he prays—the hands are extended and the palms of the hands face each other in the early Christian manner of prayer; today we fold our hands.

The COLLECT has an interesting history. You remember we pointed out that the first Christians gathered at a place not too far distant from the church and came in procession to the church for the Mass? Now when everyone had COLLECTED at this meeting place, a prayer was said before the procession started on its way. This prayer is the COLLECT said in each Mass. It is different for each Mass. Today in most churches, it is followed by prayers for peace and for the Holy Father.

### The Letter

When the COLLECTS are finished, the priest relaxes and puts his hands on the altar. He is now reading a letter. You know this letter as an EPISTLE. In the early days of the Church when St. Paul (and the other Apostles for that matter), was preaching to the people of Asia and founding new churches, he was constantly on the move. Sometimes he found it necessary to write the Christian people in distant missions a brief note of explanation or encouragement; at the service of Christian worship the priest would ask the people to be seated and then would read the message from St. Paul.

Today at Mass we still read portions of these letters of the Apostles. We also read other instructions taken from the Bible. The EPISTLE of the Mass treats of problems that concerned the people of the early centuries of Christianity and still has application today. The people sit while the EPISTLE is being read.

— (Now read the EPISTLE of today's Mass). —

## The Book Is Changed

When the reading of the letter or instructions has been completed, a signal is given to the altar boy to move the Mass book. While the boy is going to change the book from one side of the altar to the other, the prayers known as the GRADUAL PRAYERS are recited.

The changing of the book from one side of the altar to the other has a noteworthy significance: it recalls for us the gradual recession of the Jewish religious practices in favor of those taught by Our Lord—it shows the transformation of the Old Testament worship into the Christian practices of the new era.

## The Good News

At this point comes the reading of the GOSPEL—all stand. The word—GOSPEL—means “good news.” And so it is. This is the account of man’s redemption from sin and the announcement of man’s eternal destiny. The priest and the people sign little crosses on the forehead, the lips and the breast—reminding us that the Cross and the Word of God should always be in our minds, on our lips and in our hearts.

By standing as soldiers at attention during the reading of the GOSPEL, the people indicate their respect for the WORD of God— they are publicising their readiness as soldiers to go to battle, if necessary, in defense of the Word of God, the Word of life. Each Sunday a short episode from the life of Our Saviour is read as the seed thought for that day.

The priest kisses the GOSPEL book when he has finished reading the chapter from the Life of Our Lord and says: “By the words of the holy Gospel may our sins be blotted out.”

— (Now read the GOSPEL in today’s Mass). —



## Sermon

In the early days of the Church the Bishop gave the sermon at this point. It was always the Bishop who preached because Our Lord commissioned His Apostles, the first Bishops, "Go forth and teach all nations." Teaching is done by word of mouth. But the Bishop cannot be present in every church; so today, each priest is commissioned by the Bishop to fulfill this sacred function.

### I Believe

After the sermon, or instruction, again to demonstrate our faith in the teaching of Christ and His Church, the priest usually recites the CREED. This is similar to the Apostles' Creed known by all Catholics; it contains a list of all the principal teachings which Catholics believe because revealed by God Himself. We are asked to kneel at the words "He became Man" to express our gratitude for this remarkable sign of God's love for all sinners.

When the CREED is finished, the priest turns to the people and again salutes them with the greeting: "The Lord be with you." Now we all sit down.

### II

## THE MASS UNFOLDS

We have now just completed the first part of the Mass, which you probably recognized as a series of preparatory prayers and instructions—intended to prepare us for the central part, the unfolding of the Mass, which is just about to begin.

In the first days of the Church when the CREED was finished those who were not baptized, i.e., those who were still under instruction before being received into the Church, were asked to leave the building. Only baptized persons remained. Today anyone as-

sisting at the Mass may remain for the entire service.

In times of persecution defections from the Faith sometimes occurred. It was natural, therefore, that prospective converts be thoroughly screened before they were given the secret knowledge of the sacraments. They were trained, instructed and tested; gradually were they introduced to the inner life of the Church. Thus, at Mass, they were asked to leave the group after the instructions had been completed.

### Bring Your Gifts

We now come to the part of the Mass known as the OFFERTORY. The priest reads the brief OFFERTORY prayer and removes the cover from the chalice—reminding us that Our Lord died for us, stripped of His garments, clothed only with our sins.

The practice of the early Christians at the OFFERTORY of the Mass reveals how closely the people cooperated in the offering of Mass with the priest. Each person in the church made his own personal contribution to the Mass. Each came to the altar with his bread and wine that the priest, as minister of the people, would change into the Body and Blood of Our Savior. Individuals brought also flax, linen, wax for the candles, silver and gold for the ornaments of the altar. All brought their own offering to God and personally placed it at the altar.

Today it is not practical for each one to bring the bread, the wine, etc., used at Mass. However, we do contribute to the fund used to purchase these things for the church—this is the OFFERTORY collection, usually taken up each Sunday. We must remember that the amount given in this collection is really less important than the spirit with which it is given.

This is your real share in the Mass, for in the Offertory you are really giving yourself to God by giving Him some of your prized possessions. It is this return to God of your very self in

your most treasured gifts, that you fulfill the basic duty of every human being to recognize God as the Supreme Creator of the world.

You are encouraged to give to the altar whatever you know you can give to God—with the understanding that it is given, not to seek favor or preference, but simply because your gifts represent the donation of your life itself to the Merciful God. You cannot actually give your life—but you can give, instead, some of life's treasures and necessities—these things that are your other self.

The priest now offers the bread to God. After he pours wine into the chalice, it too is raised on high and offered to God.

### Now Wash the Hands

When the priest has offered to God the bread and wine, he goes to the side of the altar to wash his hands. While rinsing his fingers, he is saying a psalm: "I wash my hands among the innocent."

In the early days of the Church it was necessary for the priest to cleanse his hands. He had just received, handled and touched the gifts of bread, wine, linen, gold, silver, etc., brought by the faithful to the altar. Naturally by handling these articles, his fingers became soiled. He then washed his fingers as a practical necessity. Today the washing of the fingers of the priest reminds us of the fickle Pilate who washed his hands before the crowd, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man."

### Your Sacrifice

Returning to the center of the altar, the priest bows, silently says a prayer, and then turns to the people with a request. He says "*Orate Fratres,*" —"Pray brethren, that my sacrifice and YOURS be acceptable to Almighty God." Your sacrifice! Again you see that you are not sitting there passively, mere spectators—this

is YOUR sacrifice—you are offering YOUR gifts to God with the priest.

### Gifts Selected for God

Continuing the Mass, the priest recites the SECRET prayer or prayers. These prayers are not secret in the sense that they are not to be known. They are really prayers asking God to accept the gifts that have been *selected* or *secreted* from the large contribution toward the altar. Because usually a large offering of gifts took place at the Mass, it was necessary for the priest to select part of the gifts for immediate use at the altar. The remaining portion of the offerings was used for the sustenance of the priest or distributed **to the needy and the poor. Over the portion of the offerings selected for the Mass the priest said the SECRET prayers.**

### A Preface

After praying that God accept the gifts of bread and wine, the priest begins the PREFACE. A preface to a book is really an INTRODUCTION; the preface gives one an idea of what is to come—it sets the theme of the book. This is what the PREFACE of the Mass does—it is an introduction to the stupendous miracle about to take place when bread and wine will be changed into the real Body and Blood of Our Lord.

As a preface to a book, this ancient and beautiful prayer introduces the theme of the Mass prayers—a governing thought to be carried through the rest of the Mass. The feast days and special occasions in the Church year regulate the theme: Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc., all sound special keynotes of joy or penance that run through the prayers of the Mass.

The PREFACE closes with the words which the angels constantly chant before the throne of God: "HOLY \* HOLY \* HOLY, Lord God of Hosts." Here the bell is rung and we all kneel.



## **Prayer for the Church**

Bowing down, the priest prays for all the members of the true Church, asking God to accept the gifts we are offering in the name of the entire Church, in union with the Holy Father, the Bishop of our diocese, and all true believers.

## **Prayer for the Living**

Pausing for a moment, the priest with his head bowed, prays for his friends among the living. He may pray for his mother and father, for his brothers and sisters—he prays for a sick woman bed-ridden for twenty years with arthritis for a friend whose husband is a drunkard, for the man himself, for the tiny shawled creature who stopped him on the street and said: “Father, say a little prayer for me.” You, too, should here remember in the Mass your living friends and companions who are in need of God’s grace and help. In the early Church a chart on which were written the names of those to be remembered in the Mass, was placed on the altar so the priest could refer to it with ease. Why not make a list yourself and place it in your Missal—a list of all your friends to be remembered in the Mass?

## **We Remember the Saints**

The priest now calls to memory the Blessed Virgin and the apostles and early martyrs, Peter, Paul and Andrew, Linus, Cletus and Clement, etc.,—asking God that because of their virtues and merits we may all be protected from danger.

## **Peace in Our Day**

Holding his hands over the bread and wine, in a moment to become the living Body of Our Lord, the priest prays that this bread and wine, the symbols of our life, will be so acceptable to God that He will give us peace in our day, will preserve us from eternal damnation, and number us among the saints in heaven.

## The Miracle

We now come to the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord. A hush comes over the church—a little bell tinkles. If we had eyes of faith, we could probably see the sanctuary around the altar crowded with adorning angels—because the God of heaven is about to come on earth. A great miracle will take place in a few seconds—bread and wine will cover from our view the real Body and Blood of Our Savior Who will be on the altar. As Our Lord came into the world for the first time at Bethlehem, so He comes again—only this time He is clothed, not in swaddling clothes, but with the appearances of bread and wine, food for our souls.

If you were at Calvary on Good Friday you would have seen the precious Blood leave the lifeless Body of Our Lord and trickle to the ground. Now on our altar again the Body and Blood of Our Lord is separated, a real repetition of Our Lord's death on Calvary. The forgiveness of sin that the death of Our Lord gained for all men on Calvary is now applied to your soul directly. In each Mass you can offer Our Lord's death for your own sins, your own infidelities. If you have sins on your conscience, you cannot afford to miss Mass *ever*.

This is what takes place at the CONSECRATION, the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord.

As the priest kneels before the white wafer, now the real Body of Our Lord, and he raises the Sacred Host on high to be seen, we should make sure that it is SEEN. We are asked to look at the Sacred Host—and likewise to look at the raised chalice containing the Precious Blood of Our Savior—to adore God present on our altar. It is not correct to bow your head at this moment; look at Our Lord hidden under the veils of bread and wine and say each time the words of St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

— (Now adore God truly present on our altar). —

## Abel, Abraham, Melchisedech

Almost immediately after the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord has taken place, the priest asks Almighty God to regard our gifts at the altar in the same favorable light in which He regarded the sacrifice of Abel, of the Patriarch Abraham and also of His high priest Melchisedech; the sacrifice of Abel, child of Adam, who was killed by his jealous brother, Cain—reminding us of Christ Who was also killed by his brothers; the sacrifice of Abraham who ordered his son, Isaac, to carry wood to a mountain top so that Abraham could fulfill God's command that he sacrifice his son—reminding us of God the Father Who allowed His Son to carry the wood of the cross to the top of a hill called Calvary; the sacrifice of Melchisedech, one of the first to offer bread and wine to God—in each Mass today Christ, through his priest, offers bread and wine to His heavenly Father.

### The Angel

Bowing down the priest prays again that our gifts be carried to the throne of God by the hands of an angel—with the hope that in our receiving of the Body and Blood of Our Lord we may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.

### The Dead

As the priest once remembered his living friends, so now he remembers in prayer his friends who have, in the beautiful words of the Mass, gone before him and now sleep the sleep of peace. The priest remembers the dead members of his family, perhaps his friend who died riddled with enemy bullets while swimming a river in war-torn France, the young husband who dropped dead in the parish last week. To these and to all the suffering souls, he prays "O Lord, give a place of rest, light and peace."

## Us Sinners

While the priest is remembering all the members of the Church, he continues, striking his breast, and says: "To *us* also, sinners, yet Thy servants . . . grant a place with the holy apostles and martyrs and all the saints . . . not weighing our merits, but freely granting us pardon."

## Praise to the Blessed Trinity

Now the priest takes in his hand the Sacred Host, makes crosses over the chalice and before it, saying: "Through Him (Christ), and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen."

This is a prayer of praise to the Blessed Trinity. Christ had become man to restore to God the honor and glory of which He had been robbed by sin—it is now through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ that we now render to God in the Mass the highest honor and glory He deserves.

## Our Father

Now the priest dares to say the most beautiful prayer we know. One day the apostles said to Our Lord: "Teach us how to pray." Our Lord replied: "When you pray, say: 'Our Father Who art in heaven . . .'". The priest says this prayer in the Mass.

The priest in praying for "our daily bread" requests not the bread that keeps life in the body, but rather the heavenly bread that brings life to the soul and which we will receive shortly in Holy Communion.

## Evils

When the 'Our Father' has been finished, the priest asks God to deliver us from all past, present and future evils—from the effects of our past sins, from the present evils we experience and from evils lurking in the future.



## Break Bread

Here the priest does something that seems startling—especially in view of the fact that we believe the Body and Blood of Christ is present under the appearances of bread and wine. The priest breaks the Sacred Host in two. Breaking a small fragment from one part of the Host, he lets it fall into the Precious Blood after he has said: “May the peace of the Lord be with you.” While the priest is saying these words he holds in his fingers a small portion of the Host and makes with this portion three small crosses over the chalice. Here we are reminded that true peace will come to us only when we live in harmony with God, with ourselves and with our neighbor.

We know that at the Last Supper Our Lord broke the bread before He gave it to his apostles. Breaking of bread has always been a symbol of hospitality—of welcome and friendship. It also reminds us that Our Lord’s Body was broken, wounded for our sins.

## Lamb of God

The priest now recites the words of John the Baptist, saying three times: “Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.” These words take us back to the river Jordan where John the Baptist once saw Our Lord coming in the distance and said to the people: “Behold the Lamb of God—behold Him, Who takes away the sins of the world.” The priest strikes his breast as a gesture of unworthiness while saying these words.

## Personal Prayers

As the time for receiving, the Body and Blood of Our Savior approaches, the priest begins to pray for himself in particular. He momentarily forgets the people and prays for himself the soul-stirring prayers just before the Communion. These prayers should be read *slowly, thoughtfully, sincerely* by every one at Mass in preparation

for the greatest act of receiving the Savior of the world within one's heart.

### A Soldier Said

A Roman soldier's words are used by the priest to indicate to God his complete unworthiness to receive Holy Communion. Our Lord once told a soldier: "I will come down to your house and heal your servant." The soldier said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed." The Church now applies those words of the pagan soldier to each of us as the priest prepares for Holy Communion. At these words—"Domine non sum Dignus"—the bell is rung three times, a signal for all to come to the altar rail.

### The Bread Returned

Now we recall the custom of the first Christians. Everyone present at Mass went to Holy Communion. It was logical for everyone to do so—had they not brought the bread and wine—was it not rightly theirs?

Now they would receive it back—changed into the Body and Blood of Our Savior. One of the greatest privileges granted to man is to receive into his heart the Lord Who made the world, Who saved the world and Who will judge every creature. The real wonder is not why God allows miserable creatures to receive Himself into their hearts—the cause for sheer amazement is why all do not receive Communion every time they assist at Mass. This is the mystery of mysteries!

In addition to the singular privilege of welcoming God into our human hearts, the receiving of Holy Communion has another most important result. By receiving Holy Communion at Mass we share more completely in the graces and blessings that Our Divine Savior obtained for the world by His death. When we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion we also take into our hearts and make our very own the fruits of Our Lord's passion and death—these fruits being the complete forgiveness of sin and the restoration of man

to God's friendship.

The practice of receiving Communion under the forms of bread and wine was discontinued for the laity some centuries ago. Today only the priest receives Communion under the two forms. The large numbers of people receiving Holy Communion, the danger of spilling the precious Blood of the Savior and hygienic reasons prompted the Church several centuries ago to give Communion to the people under the form of bread alone. In some Eastern countries Communion is still given under both forms.

— (Now go to the altar to receive your Lord and Savior). —

### III

After the priest has finished the distribution of Holy Communion, you will notice that the Mass comes quickly to an end. The Church wishes that those who received Holy Communion should talk in private to the Divine Guest in their souls. We should always remain a few minutes in prayer even when the Mass is over.

The priest first of all purifies his fingers of any particles of the Sacred Host clinging to them by pouring wine and water over his fingers and then consuming the mixture. The chalice is dried thoroughly with a linen cloth and the cover is placed on it.

### After Communion

The priest now goes to the Epistle side of the altar where the server has rearranged the Mass book. The priest will recite the after-Communion prayers—prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God for the wonderful benefits given to man through Holy Communion.

### Finished

Finally, the priest turns to the people and says: "Go, the Mass is over." Actually, the Mass is not over at this point—though it did terminate here in the early centuries.

### More

There is added to the Mass the blessing of the priest upon the entire congregation. Before you go back to your homes, your offices,

your schools and your factories, the priest says: "May the omnipotent God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you. Amen."

### More Good News

A last Gospel is read—the last bit of "good news" you are given as you leave Church. This is actually a selection from the Gospel according to St. John.

### For Russia

At the end of Mass the priest and people recite prayers in English. It is distinctly bad form to leave Mass before these prayers—especially since these prayers are said today for the afflicted people of Russia, for the "Church in Chains."

The priest then returns to the sacristy (the room where he keeps the vestments, etc.), and the Mass is over.

### Forever

But . . . THE MASS IS NEVER OVER. You should take with you into every walk of life the fruits, the blessings and consolations of the Mass. You have been present at the death of Our Lord—you have received personally the forgiveness He sought when He said: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

As you leave the church you are walking from Calvary: you are carrying into the world, into your daily life and routine the peace and joy only obtained when you realize that as a creature you have, with Our Lord's help, given to God, your Creator, the highest praise and most complete satisfaction that can ever be given by any being. The whole world should feel the impact of your daily assistance at Mass—because there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can give greater joy in heaven and bring more secure peace to your souls than making every Mass your Mass.

### III

### Conclusion

Among others, there are three important thoughts we must keep in our minds whenever we assist at Mass.



1. The first of these thoughts is:

YOU ARE NOT IN CHURCH TO WATCH THE PRIEST SAY MASS—RATHER, YOU ARE OFFERING THE MASS WITH THE PRIEST.

You are not at an opera or a stageplay. You are not a mere SPECTATOR—a mere LOOKER: you are one of the ACTORS. You are vitally important at the Mass because you are offering the Mass with the priest as your leader. You are so important to the Mass that the priest is not permitted to offer Mass without someone other than himself present while the Mass is being offered.

Remember! You are NOT just sitting in church to watch—  
YOU ARE OFFERING THE MASS WITH THE PRIEST.

2. The second point to remember is this:

OUR LORD DIED ON THE CROSS NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD—NOW IN EACH MASS YOU OFFER OUR LORD'S DEATH FOR YOUR PERSONAL SINS.

If you regret not having been able to stand under the cross on the first Good Friday to receive the sin-shattering forgiveness that Our Lord gained for us by his death, do not regret it too much. At each Mass you are actually standing under the cross—actually receiving the same forgiveness Our Lord gained for you on Calvary.

On Calvary, Our Lord, the Son of God, offered to His Father the only adequate act of adoration and satisfaction that any being ever could offer. Now Our Lord has arranged that each time you go to Mass, you can also offer to God that same act of adoration and satisfaction for your personal sins.

Hence, to offer Mass either as priest or layman, is the greatest act any human creature could perform. If you were to preserve one million people from death by starvation, that act, when compared

with spending one half hour in offering Mass, would be a mere NOTHING. By saving one million people from death, you would be doing something for creatures; in one Mass you are offering to Almighty God the highest act of honor, praise and satisfaction that can ever be offered.

If you rightly understood this, could you ever miss Mass? When will we Catholics completely understand that at the death bed there will be no accounting of money in the bank—or a tabulation of hours of rest and ease. The number of Masses we offered to God for our long list of frightening sins, will then be a very important tabulation.

Can you imagine the number of souls who are going to see their lives completely wasted—completely void, because they did not know or understand that the Mass is the most effective, the most recommended way for a sinner to wipe away the damning guilt of his misdeeds?

If you are a sinner, YOU NEED THE MASS—more than you think.

3. The third point to remember is this:

THE BEST MANNER TO OFFER THE MASS WITH THE PRIEST IS TO RECITE THE PRAYERS IN YOUR MISSAL OR PRAYER-BOOK.

There is no substitute—no, the rosary or private prayers or novenas included—for the official prayers of the Church recited by the priest in each Mass. You can only be a real OFFERER of the Mass when you recite the prayers with the priest.

Be sure therefore, to get a Missal, a prayerbook containing the prayers said during each Mass. Then recite and read these prayers with the priest, because—THIS IS YOUR MASS.

## Father Stedman's Sunday Missal

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