

Session 2: Nov 10 – Itinerary

- 1) **Welcome** – Sign-in sheet
- 2) **Opening Prayer** – *The Seeker*
- 3) **Address any questions** from Session 1 and open discussion
- 4) **Refer to handouts** – *Common “Church” Questions/Answers*
- 5) **The Sacraments** – Video / Discussion / *The Sacraments* Handout
(Deacon Jim will talk about Baptism, Confirmation, etc)
The Sacraments are tools to enhance our Catholic Roots along with prayer
- 6) **The Mass** – Video / Discussion / Handouts / Frequently Asked Questions about the Mass
and why we “Have To” go to Mass
- 7) The Eucharist (and Transubstantiation) - 2 Videos, Discussion – Handouts – The
Sacrament of the Eucharist, Eucharist Definitions, Transubstantiation and Spiritual
Communion
- 8) Who needs additional information or time outside of sessions?
- 9) Closing Song

Reference Materials from Session #1

Handbook for Catholics – Sacraments - Pages 54-55 & Order of the Mass – Pages 56-57

Pocket Book of Catholic Prayers – The Mass, Our Greatest Prayer Page 9-35

Inviting Catholics Home Web Page

www.stbrendans.net/ich



Session 2: Questions/Answers

- 1) Are you automatically excommunicated if you are divorced and remarry outside the Church?
Divorce alone was never a cause for excommunication. Divorce and remarriage without an annulment did have the potential for penalties.
In 1884, the United States Catholic bishops established a regional law that automatically excommunicated those who divorced and remarried without an annulment. It did not affect those who were only divorced, and it definitely did not excommunicate any children from the marriage. This law applied only to Catholics in the United States.
The universal 1917 Code of Canon Law, which would have been in place in the early 1960s, did not contain a penalty of excommunication for those who were divorced. Nor were the children of the divorce excommunicated.
The 1917 Code did allow for the excommunication of those who divorced and remarried without an annulment (canon 2356). However, this excommunication was not automatic. The bishop had to formally excommunicate the individual. The bishop first had to warn the person to separate from their civil marriage spouse, and if the person refused, the bishop was then to excommunicate the person. But this would not have applied to the children.
Even if your mother had been divorced and civilly remarried and either automatically or formally excommunicated, it would have been a moot point by 1977. In 1977, Pope Paul VI rescinded and halted all excommunications for the divorced and civilly remarried.
- 2) I was a Godparent when I was still in good standing in the Church. Now I am divorced and remarried and can no longer be a Godparent. What about my first Godparent responsibility?
Your responsibility as a Godparent does NOT change. If you want to explore getting back into full communion with the Church have a chat with Deacon Jim or one of our other Deacons or Priests.
- 3) How does a divorced non-Catholic get into the Church?
Divorced non-Catholics enter the Church through OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation for Adults). They may need an annulment if they have married again. Have a chat with Deacon Jim or one of our Deacon Jim or one of our other Deacons or Priests to explore what might be necessary.
- 4) I was denied a church annulment 15 years ago. Can I try again?
Yes, have a chat with Deacon Jim or one of our other Deacons or Priests.
- 5) Are your children considered illegitimate if you get an annulment?
No. The Church considered the children legitimate, always.
- 6) Is it impossible to get an annulment if your 'ex' doesn't want anything to do with it?
No, it is NOT impossible. Your ex has the right to be informed but if they do not want to participate the Tribunal will still consider the application.
- 7) If you had an abortion, who do I ask God's forgiveness and get back into the Church?
You can receive God's healing forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Session 2: Questions/Answers

- 1) Can someone who has had a vasectomy or a tubal ligation still be Catholic?
Yes, they should go to Confession and receive forgiveness.
- 2) Can a priest refuse to baptize my baby because I'm not married to the baby's father?
No. Canon 868 states that for baptism of an infant is not necessary that:
The parents or at least one of them or the person who lawfully their guardian takes their place gives consent; There be founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion.
- 3) Is it true that the Church now allows Catholics to be cremated? Yes, as long as cremation is not chosen in defiance of the Catholic belief in the resurrection of the body.
- 4) Is it true that you cannot have a Catholic funeral if you are divorced? No, that is NOT true.
- 5) Can someone who committed suicide have a Catholic funeral? Yes.
- 6) Can a non-Catholic husband be buried next to his Catholic wife in a Catholic cemetery? Yes
- 7) Does one need to go to confession in order to receive communion after being away?
Yes they should.
- 8) Can I return to the Church even though being married to a non-Catholic and how does the Church recognize this union? Yes, you can return to the Church. Your marriage might need to be validated depending on how the ceremony took place in order to be in full communion with the Church. Have a chat with Deacon Jim or one of our other Priests or Deacons.
- 9) Why do I have to pay for an annulment? In the Columbus Diocese you do not have to pay out of pocket to apply for a Formal Annulment.
- 10) Can a priest refuse me communion? Yes, if they have reason or know of a reason why.
- 11) Why does a priest at one parish have these rules and at another parish it's not a rule?
Why do the priests have so much latitude?
In short, a Priest assigned to a Church has the responsibility for pastoral care of that Church under Canon Law. The Bishop of the Diocese (called the Ordinary) assigns Priests and has several other responsibilities in his role as a successor of the Apostles.
- 12) What varies parish to parish is usually processes, not doctrines or dogmas. For instance, St Brendan requires parents to attend a Baptism Preparation class before their children's Baptism. Some requirements are set by the Diocese and some by the individual parishes and yes the Priest does have a lot of latitude at his parish within those requirements set by the Bishop, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Vatican.



Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament by which a person is cleansed of original sin and made a member of God's family, the Church. This is done with holy water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Rite of Baptism also includes anointing with the oil of the catechumens as well as chrism oil. Most often, a priest or deacon will perform the baptism, but in extreme or urgent circumstances, other members of the Church can be permitted to administer the sacrament.

In Catholic families (as well as in some Protestant denominations), baptism is most commonly administered at infancy, so that the child can receive the graces of this sacrament as early as possible (why delay being cleansed of original sin and initiated into the family of God?). But if some one didn't grow up in a religious family and wishes to become a member of the Catholic Church, they can receive Baptism as an adult after a period of formation known as RCIA or OCIA (the Rite or Order of Christian Initiation for Adults).

To recap, the Sacrament of Baptism:

- Initiates a person into the family of God
- Cleanses from the stain of original sin
- Imparts the Gift of the Holy Spirit



Confirmation

Confirmation comes from the Latin word *confirmare*, which means “to strengthen.” Christians who have been baptized and instructed, or catechized, in the faith now receive this sacrament to strengthen that faith and equip them for service in the Church and the world.

Children who grow up in the Church typically receive the Sacrament of Confirmation as an early teen after years of religious education, or catechesis, which instructs them in the doctrines and practices of the faith. For those who convert to Catholicism as adults, they are usually confirmed at the same time they are baptized. For baptized Christians who convert to Catholicism, they will receive confirmation when they are formally received into the Church.

During the sacramental rite, the bishop or priest will address each of the confirmandi—candidates eligible for confirmation—by their chosen saint’s name and anoint them with chrism oil. While the confirmandi would have originally received the Holy Spirit at Baptism, Confirmation is a new impartation of the Spirit that strengthens those baptismal gifts.

In summary, Confirmation:

- Confirms a baptized person as a fully mature member of the Catholic Church
- Is a new impartation of the Holy Spirit that strengthens baptismal gifts

Takes place as an early teen for Catholics or when baptized and/or formally received into the Church for adult converts



Eucharist

The Eucharist is the Source and Summit of the Christian life; for Catholics, it's our daily bread, the supernatural "manna" that sustains us on our spiritual journey toward heaven. St Thomas Aquinas appropriately described the Eucharist as the "Sacrament of Sacraments," because in it we receive the Person of Jesus Christ—His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

Catholics receive the Eucharist for the first time at their First Holy Communion, which for Catholics raised in the Church usually happens at around age seven or eight. This is after First Communicants receive their first Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Confession—more on that below!). Adult converts to the faith will receive their First Communion when they are formally received into the Church, which is usually when they are also confirmed.

Catholics can receive the Eucharist during Holy Communion at Mass as often as every day. The only conditions are that they observe a one-hour Eucharistic fast (except for water and medicine) before receiving Communion and that they are not aware of any mortal sin on their conscience. If they are aware of serious sin, they just need to go to confession before receiving Communion again.

To summarize, the Eucharist:

- Is known as the "Sacrament of Sacraments"
- Is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity
- Can be received once a day at Mass

Sacraments of Healing

The Sacraments of healing are those through which we are spiritually healed from sin and restored to grace (Confession) and given strength to endure (or sometimes be healed from) our physical suffering.

- Penance and Reconciliation
- Anointing of the Sick



Penance and Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, more commonly known as Confession, is the sacrament by which Catholics confess their sins and receive absolution from a priest. It's not the priest himself who forgives sins, but God administering his grace sacramentally through the priest. And it's this grace that strengthens penitent Catholics to remain in a state of grace—free from mortal sin and in friendship with God.

If a Catholic commits a [mortal sin](#)—a sin that is serious, that they were fully aware of, and that they freely chose—they need to go to confession and repent of that sin to be restored to a state of grace (which includes being able to receive Holy Communion). While not required, it's also strongly recommended that Catholics confess venial sins (non-mortal sins), because making use of the grace of the sacrament strengthens Catholics to resist temptation to sin, whether venial or mortal.

Before going to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, Catholics will often conduct an [examination of conscience](#) to help them remember the sins they want to confess. After confessing them to a priest, they will receive a [penance](#) from him, which is a way to help correct the wrong they've done and grow in their relationship with God. An example of this is apologizing to someone they've hurt or praying specific prayers. Finally, they will make an [act of contrition](#), and the priest will grant them [absolution](#), which absolves them from their sins by the authority Christ gave to His Church.

To recap, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation:

- Is also known as confession
- Imparts to the penitent forgiveness of sins and strength to resist temptation
- Restores the penitent to a state of grace



Anointing of the Sick

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is commonly associated with the Last Rites, but this sacrament is [not limited to the end of one's life](#). Anyone who is seriously ill can receive the Anointing of the Sick as a way of receiving strength to face their suffering with [courage and hope](#), even if God doesn't heal them physically.

The Anointing of the Sick is also a way to unite the sick person's sufferings with Christ's, giving them the grace to use their suffering as a means of serving the Church both with their prayers and by their witness to resurrection hope. This affirms their dignity as human beings created in God's image, regardless of infirmity or physical limitation.

When administering this sacrament, a priest anoints the sick person's forehead and hands with the Oil of the Sick and blesses them. If this sacrament is part of the Last Rites, Confession and Holy Communion will also be offered (if the dying person is able).

In summary, the Anointing of the Sick:

- Is not limited to the Last Rites—anyone seriously ill can receive
- Includes anointing with the Oil of the Sick and blessing by the priest
- Affirms the dignity of the sick and unites their suffering with Christ's

Sacraments of Service

The Sacraments of Service are those through which we serve the Church and help build up the Kingdom of God:

- Holy Matrimony
- Holy Orders

These sacraments are directly related to one's vocation, or their life's calling from God. This is not to exclude single people; those who have not yet married nor discerned a vocation to the priesthood or religious life are still fully members of the Church. They can serve the Kingdom of God in a unique way through the freedom their singleness provides. This freedom includes the option to discern and enter into either of the two main vocations at any point in their lives.

Holy Matrimony

In the Sacrament of [Holy Matrimony](#), a man and a woman [witness to Christ's love](#) for his Bride, the Church, through the covenant they make to each other. Their marriage commitment is also a reflection of the Holy Trinity, who is a community of persons bound in love.



Because marriage is a sacrament, it becomes a tangible means of grace for husbands and wives that strengthens them to love, serve, and support one another throughout their lives in their vocations as lay people. It also gives them grace to extend that love to any children that God gives them as well as their broader community and society as a whole. After all, the family is the basic building block of society!

While a priest officiates the wedding Mass or ceremony, in which the bride and groom exchange vows, the actual sacrament of marriage is one which the husband and wife confer on each other in the marital embrace. (If this is a new concept for you, then you should check out Pope St. John Paul II's teaching on Theology of the Body.)

To summarize, the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony:

- Is a sacrament the wife and husband confer on each other
- Serves as a witness of Christ's spousal love for the church
- Gives the spouses the grace to love each other, their families, and their community



Holy Orders

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines Holy Orders this way:

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus, it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry.

Holy Orders are the sacrament by which a man is ordained as a deacon, priest, or bishop, commissioned to serve God and the Church in this specific office. Because these offices are directly related to one's vocation, becoming a priest or deacon is not merely a matter of choice, like how one would choose a career. Instead, it is a generous and self-sacrificial response to God's calling (similar to the call of matrimony), in response to His total and self-giving love.

This sacrament is celebrated during the Rites of Ordination, which takes place during a Mass. The rite includes the "laying on of hands" on the candidate by the bishop— ["an ancient Biblical gesture beseeching God to empower the candidate by the Holy Spirit"](#)— followed by a prayer of consecration, investing the new priest with his garments (the stole and chasuble), and anointing his palms with the Oil of Chrism.

If you're wondering, *what about those who are not called to neither marriage nor the priesthood (like nuns)*, rest assured that religious life and consecrated virginity are equally valid vocations, by which Catholics discern God's call on their lives and profess vows in accord with that vocation to serve the Church. However, these do not involve the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which specifically ordains a man to the office of the diaconate or the priesthood.

To recap, the Sacrament of Holy Orders:

- Ordains a man to be a deacon, priest, or bishop
- Includes the laying on of hands, receiving vestments, and anointing with oil
- Is unique to the offices of deacon, priest, or bishop, but religious life and consecrated virginity are equally valid vocations in the church

You now have a basic understanding of the seven sacraments, but there is so much more to sacramental theology! For further reading, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Mass

How would I explain what the Mass is to non-Catholic friends? You can tell them the Mass is our central form of worship because it unites us to Jesus Christ in his saving death and by the grace of the Holy Spirit draws all of us into deeper communion with him and with one another.

Why do we have a Mass? We celebrate the Mass because Jesus asked us to do this when he instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. St. Paul tells us that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and said, "this is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me". Then he took the cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1Cor 11:23-27). The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the early Christians would gather for the breaking of the bread in remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection (2:42). They believed (as we believe today) that the bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

How does the bread and wine change into the Body and Blood of Christ? During the Eucharist prayer, the priest asks God to send the Holy Spirit and transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is called transubstantiation. It is the conversion of the Substance of the Eucharist elements into the Body and Blood of Christ at consecration, with only the appearance of bread and wine still remaining.

What does the word "Eucharist" mean? The word "Eucharist" is from a Greek word that means "thanksgiving". For us, it is another term used in conjunction with the Mass and holy communion. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we give thanks to God for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

What do I need to know about the Mass?

- **Introductory part** of the Mass includes the procession, the greeting, the penitential rites, the Gloria (except during Advent and Lent), and the opening prayer.
- The next part of the Mass is the **Liturgy of the Word**. It includes the readings, responsorial psalm, Gospel, homily, Creed, and Prayer of the Faithful.
- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist** begins when the gifts of the bread and wine are brought to the altar. During the Eucharistic Prayer, we witness the miracle of bread and wine becoming the Body and Blood of Christ. We proclaim the mystery of our faith and join ourselves in union with Christ's singular sacrifice to the Father. Then, we respond with the great Amen, recite the Lord's Prayer, share a sign of Christ's peace with each other, ask the Lamb of God to have mercy on us and humbly approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. (If you are unable to receive the sacrament, you may make a spiritual communion, receiving Jesus into your heart.)

- After the distribution of holy Communion, we have a chance to meditate before the **dismissal rites/concluding rites**, which include the closing prayer, a blessing, the commission to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord and the final hymn.

What do I need to know about the readings? The first reading is always taken from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season when we read from the Act of the Apostles). The first reading always relates to the Gospel reading for that day. The second reading is always taken from one of the letters in the New Testament or from the Book of Revelation. The second reading does not correspond to the Gospel passage but, instead, is a continuation from the previous week's passage. The Gospel passage is the most important reading because it is Jesus speaking to us through his words and his actions. We sit during the first two readings, but we stand for the Gospel in acknowledgement that we are hearing the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the significance of the responsorial psalm? The psalms were originally written as Jewish songs of prayer, praise and petition. The early Christians sang psalms when they broke bread and shared the cup in remembrance of Jesus. We have continued that tradition over the centuries. Today, the responsorial psalm relates to the theme of the first reading and the Gospel.

Why do we stand up after the homily for the Nicene Creed? We stand up to proclaim publicly that we believe. We profess that we believe in God, In Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church, in the Communion of Saints, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life after death. The Creed is first and foremost a prayer, not merely an oath of membership, which professes the creative and saving love of God and how this has been revealed, experienced, and known in history. This is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our faith.

Do Catholics re-crucify Christ at every Mass? No, we do not. Jesus died only once. During the Mass, we remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on Calvary, and we unite ourselves to the sacrifice that Christ made by offering to God all that we are and all that we do.

Why is it called the Mass? The word "Mass" comes from the Latin word missa, which means, "to send". The Mass prepared us spiritually to live as authentic followers of Jesus Christ in our everyday lives.

Why do some people call the Mass “liturgy”? The liturgy is any public ritual that the Church celebrates. In the past, the Mass was called the “Divine Liturgy”. The word “Liturgy” actually comes from the Greek word meaning “the work of the people.” When you attend Mass, you are a participant, not a spectator. You join with the priest and the people around you in prayer, reflection, thanksgiving, and communion.

Why can’t someone “just pray at home”? It’s good to pray at home, yet private prayer doesn’t take the place of attending Mass. When you pray at home, your prayer is personal and one-dimensional. When you are at Mass, you pray in union with other believers as part of a community. The Mass gives you the opportunity to seek forgiveness for your sins, be inspired by the readings and the homily, offer yourself to the Lord, reach out to others with the peace of Christ, forgive others during the Lord’s Prayer, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and become empowered to carry the presence of Christ into the world.

Why do some people genuflect or bow before entering a pew? When we genuflect (lowering ourselves until one knee touches the floor) or bow (bending reverently at the waist), we recognize with our whole being that we are in the presence of God; indeed, we are in the real presence of Christ in the tabernacle. Why some people genuflect and others bow may have to do with physical limitations.

What is the significance of the different colors the priest wears? The colors reflect the different times of the liturgical year. Advent and Lent are purple. Christmas and Easter are white. Pentecost, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and the feast days of apostles and martyrs are red. Green is used for ordinary time.

Is Mass supposed to be entertaining? The Mass was never intended as entertainment. It is a ritual, which means that through the repetition of prayers, movements, and the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, we are spiritually formed, inspired and consoled.

The Mass does not try to induce a particular feeling in participants. It allows each person to bring his or her own feelings and incorporate them into the liturgy. That’s why it is possible for 2 people to attend Mass, one grieving a death and the other celebrating a birth, yet both feel connected. The whole point during mass is to offer yourself and all that you may be feeling to God in Jesus Christ.

Why do we have to attend Mass every weekend? The moral obligation to attend Mass has been Church law since the 4th century. But rather than think of it as something we ‘have to do’, we should think of Mass as valuable time spent with our loving God and with others. When we go to Mass, we begin to see that we are not alone and recognize that we are part of the Body of Christ, and if one part of the body is missing, the whole body suffers.

Why do we “have to” go to Mass?

“Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.” Luke 14:15

Whether you are 8 years old or in your 80’s, at some point in your life you’ve probably struggled with the question “Why do we “have to” go to Mass?

- You just may not feel like going at times
- You may not like the music or homilies in your parish
- You may think Mass is boring
- You may feel as if the parish is not welcoming
- You may try to convince yourself that you can pray just as well outdoors or in the comfort of your own home

The Power of Negative Thinking

Even though you know that going to Mass is a good thing, you can talk yourself out of going by focusing on the negatives. At first, you may feel a little guilty, but eventually, you can justify your decision by convincing yourself that you are too busy, too tired, too bored, or too frustrated.

Think Positively

What if you changed your attitude about going to Mass? What if you began to think of Mass as the time in the day when you can connect with God and with other people in a special way? What if you concentrated on things you like about your parish instead of what you don’t like? What if you made Mass a priority?

The effects of these kinds of positive attitudes may surprise you. Research studies show that people who go to church every week are:

- Less likely to suffer from depression
- Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
- More likely to have solid sense of right and wrong
- More likely to live longer and happier life

Here are 10 good reasons to go to Mass:

1. **God asks us to make one day holy.** God asks us to set aside one day to refocus physically, mentally, and spiritually. We live in a secular world. Going to Mass helps us to see everything from a different perspective. We begin to see in the depths of our being that God is in charge. We can let go of our own agenda

because we know that God will inspire us, guide us and strengthen us for the week ahead.

2. **Jesus gives us the gift of himself.** When we go to Mass, we are doing what Jesus commanded his followers to do. It is a command to love and to be loved by God. Jesus offers himself to us in the Word of God that we hear and in his Real Presence, offered to us in the Blessed Sacrament at Communion.
3. **We need to be part of a community.** When we come together at Mass to pray and worship God, we fulfill a deep need inside of us to be in communion with other people. The other parishioners – even if we don't know them – give us support, affirmation and encouragement in our attempt to live the Gospel message. They help us to see that we are not alone. They remind us that we are all part of the Body of Christ.
4. **God has a special message for us.** When we listen to the homily, and the prayers of the Mass, God speaks to us in a special way. We should come away from each Mass with at least one inspiration that will impact our lives in some way. We just have to pay attention and be open to what the Lord is trying to tell us.
5. **We need to talk to God.** When we go to Mass, we speak to God through our singing, our communal responses and prayers, and our personal prayers from the depths of our hearts. During Mass, we have the opportunity to ask God for what we need, promise God that we will do what He wants us to do, and thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us.
6. **People need our Prayers.** We can pray for other people anytime, but when we pray for other during Mass, we pray in a special way. It doesn't matter if the other people are separated from us by distance or by death. The Mass brings us together in the Body of Christ, and we become the communion of saints. It is part of the cosmic dimension of the Mass that unites heaven and earth by reaching across time and space.
7. **We need to stand up for what we believe.** Being a follower of Jesus is counter-cultural. At every Mass, we have the opportunity to stand up and proclaim what we believe publicly. We admit that we believe in God, in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life after death. It is powerful statement of allegiance and an opportunity to recommit ourselves.
8. **We need to acknowledge that we make mistakes.** At every Mass, we have the opportunity to review the past week. We admit that we have sinned in thought, in word, in deed, in what we have done and what we have failed to do. We seek forgiveness, and we are assured that God still loves us. Before we receive

Communion, we admit that we are not worthy and ask God to heal us. Going to Mass helps us to strengthen our commitment to live moral lives.

9. **We need ritual in our lives.** Mass is ritual, which means that through the repetition of prayers, movements, and the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, we are formed, disciplined and consoled. The “sameness” of the Mass carries us along the spiritual journey – even when we don’t “feel” like praying. The “sameness” of the ritual allows us to be transformed on a soul level, even if we are unaware of what is happening.
10. **We need to experience something bigger than ourselves.** When we go to Mass, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we offer our ordinary lives to God through Jesus, we enter into God’s great plan for the world. We are strengthened by the Eucharist and sent out into the world to bring the Gospel message to all people. The Mass gives meaning and purpose to our lives. It gives us a sense of destiny and offers the kind of peace that the world cannot give. It helps us develop a sense of wonder and awe. It helps us to see that there is something bigger than ourselves.

Why praying at home is not good enough

It’s good to pray at home, but private prayer doesn’t take the place of coming to Mass. When you pray at home, your prayer is personal and one-dimensional. But when you come to Mass, you pray with your whole being. You use all of your senses. You see, hear, smell, taste and touch. You use your body by genuflecting, sitting, kneeling, standing, walking and singing.

Mass also gives you the opportunity to:

- Seek forgiveness for your sins
- Learn how God’s word impacts your life in the homily
- Offer yourself to the Lord
- Experience the miracle of bread and wine changing into the Body and Blood of Christ
- Reach out to others with the Peace of Christ
- Admit that you are not worthy, and then come forward to receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ
- Receive a special blessing
- Be commissioned to go out and make the world better place

Taking Children to Mass

According to Canon Law, by age 7, children should be attending Mass every Sunday. Here are some simple strategies for making Mass more pleasant with children.

- Decide ahead of time what Mass to attend
- Set out everyone's clothes so getting ready is not a hassle
- Bring along a picture book about Mass
- Make sure everyone had something to put into the collection basket
- Sit in front so children can see
- Bring children into the communion line, even if they are too young to receive
- Praise your children for good behavior
- Celebrate good behavior by doing something special after Mass

Getting Involved

One of the best ways to get more out of Mass is to volunteer for one of the liturgical, music or hospitality ministries. Even if just one family member is involved, that person represents the whole family in the celebration. If you haven't introduced yourself to your pastor yet, make it a point to say hello after Mass. He will appreciate meeting you and the members of your family, and you will feel a closer connection to the parish.

Tips for Parents of teens

Talk to your teens about the Mass. If your teen loves to go to Mass, use this opportunity for faith sharing that strengthens your teen's relationship with you and with God.

If your teen is indifferent or doesn't like going to Mass, explain that there are some things in life that we do because they are good for us – whether we feel like doing those things or not. Mass is not about feelings. It is about giving ourselves to God. It is about discovering what purpose God has for our lives. The best way to help your teen is by the witness of your own faith. If they see that the Mass gives you life, they will begin to search for that meaning in their own lives.

More than entertainment

When entertainment is the model for church worship services, the leaders try to induce particular feelings in the audience. The Mass, however, is just the opposite. It is a ritual in which people bring their own feelings and incorporate them into the liturgy. That's why it is possible for 2 people to attend Mass, one grieving a death and the other celebrating a birth, yet both feel connected. The whole point is to go beyond feelings into authentic prayer, which is offering oneself to God in Jesus Christ.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Most Blessed Sacrament:

The Eucharist is the highpoint and source of strength in the life of a Catholic Christian. It is, as the Catechism puts it, that “source and summit” of our Christian life.

What is the Eucharist? The Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. It is not just a symbol or a sign but His real Body and Blood. The change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus is called **Transubstantiation**. The entire substance of the bread and wine change, although they appear the same as they did before the change. Validly ordained priests have the power to invoke the Holy Spirit and pronounce the words of consecration when they act in the person of Christ through the power of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. “By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity” (CCC1413).

The bread and wine are not symbols of Jesus’ Body. The Baltimore Catechism explains one of the ways we know is this: “Christ could not have used clearer, more explicit words than “This is My Body.” He did not say, “This is a sign of My Body or This represents My body”, but “This is My Body”. Catholics take Christ at His word because He is the omnipotent God. One His word they know that the Holy Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ.

What are Its fruits?

When we receive Holy Communion, we grow closer to Christ. The Eucharist helps us avoid sin and strengthens our charity. It helps us see the face of Jesus in the poor. The Catechism explains, “Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identified us with (Jesus’) Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints” (CCC1419).

How do we receive the Body of Christ?

Anytime you touch something extremely valuable, you do it with great care. Just as you would treat an antique vase or precious jewels with care and wouldn’t – or shouldn’t – play catch with the vase or let a toddler play dress-up with the jewels, when you receive Communion, you should do so in a way that treats the Blessed Sacrament worthily.

Because you are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, you should fast for at least one hour before receiving Communion, except for water and medicine. It is also important to dress in appropriate attire for Mass as a sign of respect.

When you arrive at Mass, make the **Sign of the Cross** with **holy water** to remind yourself of your Baptism and that you are a member of Christ's Body, the Church. Then **genuflect** towards the Real Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle before you enter your pew. Try to focus your thoughts on the mystery you are about to encounter.

You can receive the **Eucharist on your tongue (the ordinary way)**, a traditional sign of our humility before God and an acknowledgement that it is Christ who feeds us. It is also possible to receive Communion **in your hands (the optional way)**. If you do so, you should make sure your hand is clean and empty, placing your left hand flat over your right, and that you put the host in your mouth right away rather than waiting until you return to your pew.

Non-Catholics and Catholics who are in a state of **mortal sin** may not receive Communion. Some question this decision because they believe it excludes people and causes division among Christians. **And the fact is that it does exclude people so why do we do it?** We do it because when we receive Jesus Christ into our souls, our souls should be ready to give Him a good, pure home. Our souls should be in the state of grace to receive Him worthily. If we are in the state of mortal sin and receive the Eucharist, we commit sacrilege, treating a sacred object unworthily, as if we don't care. Confession restores grace to the soul and purifies the soul for the Eucharist.

For non-Catholics and others who do not believe the Eucharist is the Lord, to take the Eucharist is the Lord, to take the Eucharist would be a lie. Anyone who isn't fully initiated into the life of the Church cannot receive the gifts the Eucharist offers.

The Catechism and canon law provide for very limited circumstances where, in case of "grave necessity", such as the danger of death, Sacraments may be administered to those who ask, "provided that they manifest the Catholic faith...and are properly disposed" (CCC844).

It's important to remember that excluding people is not necessarily bad. You would exclude novice pilots from flying commercial jets, for example. You would exclude first-year medical students from the operating room. A 10-year-old at his first violin lesson

cannot play at Carnegie Hall. This is because you can't just one day fly a plane, perform open heart surgery or perform a violin concerto: you must first practice and prepare.

Why should we receive Communion often?

Just as we need to eat and drink several times a day to maintain our physical strength, so we also need to receive the Eucharist to feed the soul. The very Body of Christ, the Eucharist, strengthens and nourishes the Body of Christ – the Church – whose members are gathered in that Eucharistic celebration. When we eat food, our bodies receive the nourishment they need to maintain strength. The Eucharist is food for our journey.

Frequent reception of the Eucharist explains the Catechism, increases charity in our daily life and that charity allow us to root ourselves in Christ (CCC1394). So, what does increasing charity in our daily life mean? It means that we see things in a different way; a more positive and hopeful way – a way that leads us to practice the values of the Kingdom of God and to steer clear of values that lifestyles of materialism and consumerism promote. Frequent reception of the Eucharist helps us to keep our spiritual goals in check and to avoid those little things in life that lead us to sin.

Catholics are required to receive Communion once a year, but the Church warmly invites us to receive it much more often; every week, even every day!

The Eucharist Definitions

Agent: A philosophical term that refers to who or what made or caused a thing to exist.

Communion: A title for the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist, we are united to Jesus Himself. We are made members of the one Body of Christ. All who receive the Eucharist participate in the one bread and one body, which makes us one People in God, united to Christ and each other.

Eucharist: The Sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. It is spiritual food for our soul. It is not merely a symbol, but is Jesus' true flesh and blood.

Lamb of God: Jesus is the Lamb of God whose sacrifice on the Cross freed us from sin and spiritual death. Just as the Israelites had to eat the flesh of the Pascal Lamb for the sacrifice to be complete, Jesus gave His Body and Blood in the Eucharist at the Last Supper for us to receive the blessings of the Passover of the New Covenant.

Last Supper: The final meal Jesus shared with His Apostles. It was a Passover meal. Jesus, the Lamb of God, transformed the sacred meal into the Passover of the New Covenant by giving us His Body and Blood to eat in the Eucharist.

Liturgy of the Eucharist: The part of the Mass in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. In this part of the Mass, the priest prays the words of consecration and changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. We also come to the altar of the Lord and receive Holy Communion.

Liturgy of the Word: The first part of the Mass in which we receive the written Word of God. In this part of the Mass, the Scriptures are proclaimed and the priest teaches us in his homily. We also join together in prayer for others and profess our faith.

Manna: Food that God provided to the Israelites from Heaven as they wandered the desert for 40 years. It is unknown what manna really was, but the Israelites called it "bread from Heaven" and were physically nourished by it. It foreshadows the Bread of Life, Christ's own Body and Blood given to us as spiritual food, which unlike manna, gives eternal life.

Mass: The liturgical celebration and memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and Resurrection from the dead. At every Mass, the priest changes the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist. The Mass is divided into two sections: The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Matter: A philosophical term that refers to what a thing is made of.

Memorial: The way of remembering the past. The word “remember” means to make present again. In the Eucharist, Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross is made present to us again, in response to Jesus’ command at the Last Supper to, “Do this in memory of me.”

Pascal Mystery: Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection which saved us from Sin and death for new life as sons and daughters of God as the Passover of the New Covenant.

Purpose: A philosophical term that refers to what a thing is for or is meant to do.

Qahal: Hebrew for “assembly, community or congregation”. It is one of the first words used in the Old Testament to describe the People of God, the Chosen People whom He had called out or assembled in His name. The Qahal of the Old Testament was the seed of the Church in the New Testament, which God intended to build from the beginning.

Substance: A philosophical term that refers to what a thing is, or what is absolutely necessary to a thing being the way that it is. In the Eucharist, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ’s Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Todah: The primary liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple. It means, “thanksgiving” and consisted of a sacred meal of bread and wine. The Todah foreshadows the sacred meal of bread and wine Jesus changed into His Body and Blood at the Last Supper and which we still receive today in the Eucharist at every Mass.

Transubstantiation: The word used to describe the change of the bread and wine at Mass into the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, “the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of the Blood of Christ”. This change is brought about in the eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Christ and by the action of the Holy Spirit. However, “the outward characteristics of bread and wine, that is the “eucharistic Species”, remain unaltered”. In this teaching, the notions of “substance” and “transubstantiation” are not linked with any particular theory of metaphysics. The Catholic Church teaches that, in the Eucharistic offering, bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. The affirmation of this doctrine on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was expressed, using the word “transubstantiate” by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. Wikipedia

Historical Context

The term “transubstantiation” was first used in the 11th century and became widely accepted by the 12th century. It was formally defined at the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 and reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in the 16th century. These councils emphasized that this change is a mystery of faith, not fully comprehensible by human reason.

This whole mystery is preserved in the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass. We too take unleavened bread and wine, two sources of nourishment. By the will of the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit, and priesthood of Jesus entrusted to His ordained priests, and through the words of consecration, that bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Yes, the bread and wine do not change in characteristics they still look the same, taste and smell the same, and hold the same shape. However, the reality, “the what it is,” the substance does change. We do not receive bread and wine; we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. We call this “change of substance” transubstantiation, a term used at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and asserted again by our Holy Father in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (#15). Therefore, each time we celebrate Mass, we are plunged into the whole ever present, everlasting mystery of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, and share intimately in life of our Lord through Holy Eucharist.

In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul highlighted these very points: “At every celebration of the Eucharist, we are spiritually brought back to the paschal Triduum: to the events of the evening of Holy Thursday, to the Last Supper, and to what followed it. The institution of the Eucharist sacramentally anticipated the events which were about to take place, beginning with the agony in Gethsemane”. (#3)

Moreover, in and through the Holy Eucharist, our late Holy Father taught that we can contemplate the face of Christ because He is truly present: “To contemplate Christ involves

being able to recognize Him wherever He manifests Himself, in His many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of His Body and Blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by Him she is fed and by Him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a mystery of light. Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.” (#6).

The Catholic Church has always cherished this treasure. St. Paul wrote, “I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ Every time then you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!” (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

During the days of Roman persecution, to clearly distinguish the Eucharist from the cultic rite of Mithra and to dispel Roman charges of cannibalism, St. Justin Martyr (d. 165) wrote in his First Apology, “We do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilate of its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of His own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving.”

Later, the Council of Trent in 1551 addressed the heretical views of the Reformers. Remember Zwingli and Calvin believed that Christ was present only “in sign”; Luther believed in consubstantiation whereby the Eucharist is both body and blood, and bread and wine; and Melancthon believed that the Eucharist reverts back to just bread and wine after communion. Trent’s Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist specified, “In the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the appearances of those perceptible realities. For there is no contradiction in the fact that our Savior always sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven according to His natural way of existing and that, nevertheless, in His substance He is sacramentally present to us in many other places.”

Therefore, no faithful, knowledgeable Catholic would say that the Holy Eucharist is just bread and wine or even just symbolizes the Body and Blood of Christ. Yes, we pray for grace that we may believe more strongly each day in this precious gift of Christ Himself. Perhaps we should dwell on the words of Thomas Aquinas in *Adoro Te Devote*, “Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore; masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more. See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart: Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art. Fraser Field, Founder of CERC. I

Spiritual Communion

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion is an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and lovingly embrace him at a time or in circumstances when one cannot receive Him in sacramental Communion. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Mass. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily.

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,

and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,

come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there

and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.