

## **Biblical Walk through the Mass**

1. **Every single word matters** – there is a reason for everything that is said and done at Mass.
2. **The Mass is deeply rooted in the scriptures.** The more we understand the scriptures, the more we will “get” what is happening in the Mass.

**All stand and sing the hymn as the Priest processes into the sanctuary.** Everything in the Mass has its roots in scripture, even the practice of standing as Mass begins. In the book of Exodus, Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites in prayer. The people themselves refused to enter the Tent of Meeting where Moses would speak to God because they didn't feel worthy. They begged Moses to go in on their behalf. And so, as Moses walked out from the people to go to the special tent to speak to God, the people would stand and sing and say prayers of adoration to God.

**The Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross.** In the books of Ezekiel and of Revelation, the friends of God were marked out with a sign of the cross on their foreheads. This mark was a sign of protection by God and of distinction as belonging to Him and not to another.

- Further, as we trace this sign over our bodies we invoke the name of the Blessed Trinity. Calling on God is an ancient practice. Adam's son Seth called on the name of the Lord. Abraham and Isaac both call on the name of the Lord as they erected altars to him. In the New Testament Jesus confirms the power of calling on the divine persons, *“Whatever you ask in my name, I will do.”*

**The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.** From the biblical perspective, the greeting *“The Lord be with you,”* is no ordinary greeting, it's not just another way of the priest saying “Good Morning.” These words were used throughout scripture to signify the closeness of God. And at crucial moments in their lives, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Jeremiah, and the Blessed Virgin Mary were all encouraged by these precise words, *“The Lord be with you ... God is with you.”*

Our response to the priest's reminder of God's closeness to us means more than merely, “Oh, God is with you too Father.” Soon, we will say, *“and with your Spirit.”* This is to mean that God is with the spirit of the priest in a special way. That at his ordination he was consecrated as a priest to stand before God on behalf of others. This is a reminder to the Priest of the great gift and power that he has been given and a warning to him, to make sure he is worthy of leading the people in worship.

**I confess to Almighty God.** Throughout the Old Testament, whenever God manifests his presence to his people the common response is usually, fear and awe, sometimes the people would even throw themselves on the ground or cover their faces, as they acknowledged their unworthiness to stand in his presence. The same thing happens at the Transfiguration as Peter, James, and John all fall to the ground when the divinity of Jesus is manifested. In like manner, we too confess our unworthiness and sins to God at the beginning of the Mass, as here He will manifest his presence in the Holy Eucharist. We will now add the words, *“Through my fault,*

*through my fault, through my most grievous fault,”* to emphasize our unworthiness before God in line with the great biblical figures of old.

**Kyrie Eleison.** After confessing our sinfulness to God, we cry out to him for mercy. We cannot go on in the Mass without praying, *“Lord have mercy!”* If there is one expression that is constantly used throughout the entire scripture’s it’s this request for God’s mercy. Two blind men, Bartimeus, ten lepers, and St. Peter, just to name a few, cried out, *“Lord, Have mercy.”*

**Glory to God in the Highest.** After confessing our sinfulness, begging God for mercy, we now sing a hymn of praise to God, for he has heard our cry for mercy as he quickly answered the cries for mercy of those in the scriptures. The Gloria is filled with quotes from all over the scriptures. The first words make up the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus, as they sang, *“Gloria in excelsis! Glory to God in the Highest and peace to people of good will!”* Jesus came down from Heaven to be one of us so that he could reveal himself to us and save us from our sins!

**Opening Prayer.** The priest then says, *“Let us pray,”* and he pauses so as to give everyone a chance to silently place their prayers before God. Then he sums them all up with an official prayer.

**The Readings.** After his resurrection, Jesus met a few of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. There, it says, *“... beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures.”* Before they recognised Jesus in the *‘breaking of the bread,’* which is the Mass, He first went over the scriptures with them. And so we continue that tradition by having a reading proclaimed from the Old Testament, the psalms, the New Testament, and the Gospel. Following all of the readings, the priest offers a homily or a reflection on the readings and explains some aspect of them to the people.

#### **CONCLUSION: MASS AS THE HIGH POINT OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP**

One of the ways that we can pray the Mass is by thinking about the different parts of Scriptures to which it refers to. We can then make that prayer our own by participating in the Mass.

- With Peter, James and John, we can fall down in humility, fear and awe before God and declare our sorrow for our sins by saying, *“through my fault, though my fault, through my most grievous fault.”*
- We can beg God for mercy with Bartimeus and lepers, *“Lord, have mercy.”*
- And we can join in the joy of the angels at the nativity as we sing, *“Glory to God in the Highest and peace to people of good will.”*

The Mass is the Summit of the worship of the Scriptures. Abraham, Moses and David all looked forward to it and we, together with them, now join in this, the greatest act of worship this side of Heaven.

#### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The preparation takes place in the context of one prayer called the Eucharistic Prayer. This is the prayer of the Church which serves as preparation for the coming of Jesus in the Eucharist, calling down by the power of the Holy Spirit the presence of Jesus in the bread and the wine, and a prayer of praise and worship immediately after the bread and wine have become the body and blood of Jesus. The Eucharistic Prayer begins with a three part dialogue:

***The Lord be with you – And with your spirit.***

Every time great figures of Sacred Scripture would encounter God the angel would greet them with the words: The Lord be with you. We have heard these words at the beginning of the Mass, and before the proclamation of the Gospel. Here we hear them once again, as a reminder that we are in need of God's help as we enter into His presence.

***Lift up your hearts – we lift them up to the Lord***

Our heart should be lifted up as we enter into the presence of God, which symbolizes our entire being focusing now on God and not on our earthly affairs.

***Let us give thanks to the Lord our God – It is right and just.***

We are also giving thanks to the Lord for allowing us to be in His presence.

The Eucharistic Prayer will continue with the prayer called the Preface by singing the praises of God, reminding all of us what God has done for us. As Mary did in the prayer of *Magnificat* as she was preparing to give birth to Jesus, so too does the priest with the preface, a prayer of thanksgiving as he recounts what God has done for us.

**Sanctus – prayer of the angels**

The preface ends with the singing of *Sanctus*, Holy, holy, holy. These are heavenly words of praising God by the angels in Heaven, as seen in the vision of Isaiah 6:3 and in the book of Revelation 4. We join the host of angels who continually praise God in Heaven with this threefold praise: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts".

**Consecration – real presence of Jesus**

What follows is the climax of the Eucharistic prayer, the words of consecration which Jesus first spoke at the Last Supper: "*Take this and eat, this is my body. Take this and drink, this is my blood*". We all kneel during this part of the prayer, as we recognize the most sacred of moments, when Jesus becomes present in the bread and the wine. We recall the words of Jesus: "*do this in memory of me*", and "*unless you eat my body and drink my blood you will not have life within you*" (Jn. 6). This is also the time when the priest will genuflect for the first time since the start of Mass, recognizing the presence of Christ Himself on the altar.

A prayer of intercession and thanksgiving follows the consecration, as we bring before Christ present among us all of our needs and desires of our heart.

**Communion Rite**

What follows is our preparation for receiving Holy Communion. We pray the Lord's Prayer, and once again acknowledge our belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. We kneel once more when the priest raises the Consecrated Host and says: "*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world*". The symbolism of the Jesus being called the Lamb of God is very important. It reminds us of our Jewish roots, when a lamb would be offered for the sins of the people. It reminds us of the words of St. John the Baptist who pointing at Jesus said: "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*". These words remind us that as the sacrifice of the lamb would take people's sins away in the Old Testament, the death of Jesus on the cross is the ultimate sacrifice which takes our sins away. "*Blessed as those called to the supper of the Lamb*", are the words spoken in the book of Revelation, when in the vision John saw an angel welcoming the saints in Heaven with those words. We will respond "*We are not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed*", echoing the words of the Centurion in the Scriptures, words which pleased Jesus and brought about healing for Centurion's servant.

**So what can we take away from all this?**

- 1. Mass is the prayer of the Church which is deeply Scriptural. We pray to God by using the words and actions taken from Sacred Scripture. This is not our creation, it is a gift flowing from the Word of God.**
- 2. Mass is an encounter with the Living God, Jesus Christ who become present to us in the Holy Eucharist. His promise of remaining with us until the end of times is fulfilled every time we celebrate the Eucharist.**
- 3. Mass is a Heavenly Reality, it is the prayer of worship offered to God in Heaven, as we can see in the book of Revelation. We are invited to participate in this prayer of worship already here on earth, so that some day we may share in the fullness of the Lamb's Supper in the Heavenly Liturgy.**

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