**Elements of the Mass**

From the very beginning, the primary form of worship to God is offering sacrifice – the act of giving up something of value to God. Sacrifice is the primary means of worshipping an entity or entities greater than mankind across all cultures and eras of human history.

Among the earliest activities recorded in the Creation account are the sacrifices offered by Cain and Able. Of course, the greatest act in history is also a sacrifice – Jesus offering His perfectly sinless life to the Father. This infinite act of love so pleased the Father that His sacrifice atoned for the sins of all mankind.

Simply put, Catholic Christians have continued this primary form of worship, sacrifice to God, for 2000 yrs in what is commonly called “The Mass”. They are not “sacrificing Jesus again”. They are “re-presenting” Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice, as Jesus commanded us to (“Take this, all of you, and eat of it. For this is My Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”)

**INTRODUCTORY RITES**

A Catholic Mass starts with the processional of the priest toward the sanctuary of the church. After the entrance procession, there is often a gathering song followed by a Greeting to the assembly.

**The Processional** The priest proceeds to the altar usually with the deacon and any altar servers accompanied by an opening hymn (“Greeting”).

The priest greets the people:   
 *“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.*

People respond: *“Amen”.*

**Penitential Rite** (reflecting on one’s sins and a prayer for God’s mercy called the Confiteor)

(People stands and recite together):

*I confess to almighty God  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have greatly sinned,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,  
through my fault, through my fault,  
through my most grievous fault.  
Therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,  
all the Angels and Saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters,  
to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

**Kyrie** (All recite)

*“Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy)  
Christe Eleison (Christ have mercy)  
Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy)”*

**Opening Prayer** The Priest gives an opening prayer.

**The Gloria**   
 Next the faithful say or sing the Gloria:

*”Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.   
We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,   
we give you thanks for your great glory,   
Lord God, heavenly King, O God almighty Father.  
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,   
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;   
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;   
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.  
For You alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,   
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,   
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”*

1. **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

The next section of the Mass is Readings from Scripture (Liturgy of the Word). The reader begins the readings of the OT and NT with the introductory statement *"a reading from the Book of..."* or *"a reading from the Letter to the...,"* and concludes each reading by proclaiming that the reading is *"the word of the Lord".* The people respond: *“Thanks be to God.”*

* 1. **First Reading** - a scripture reading from the Old Testament. This is read by the lector with the congregation seated.
  2. **Responsorial Psalm** - A Psalm selected from the Book of Psalms. The congregation interacts by reciting a response – usually a key phrase from the passage.
  3. **Second Reading** - A scripture reading from the New Testament.
  4. **Gospel Reading** – (People stand) The final reading and high point of the Liturgy of the Word is the proclamation of the Gospel. The faithful sing or say “Alleluia” or a short phrase from scripture as the deacon holds the Gospel high and carries it to the lecturn. Then the deacon recites a passage from one of the Gospels.

The reading is traditionally introduced with the phrase *"a reading from the Holy Gospel according to….."* followed by the evangelist's name (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). The people respond (while making the sign of the cross 3 times – on their forehead, mouth and heart): *“Glory to You, O Lord.”*   
  
To conclude the Gospel reading, the priest or deacon proclaims: *"The Gospel of the Lord"* and the faithful respond, *"Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."* The priest or deacon then kisses the book.

* 1. **Homily** – (short sermon usually related to the Gospel reading).
  2. **Prayer of the Faithful or General Intercessions** – The priest or deacon offers a collection of short prayers of petition. After each petition is said the people will respond by saying, *"Lord, hear our prayer".*
  3. **The Nicene or Apostles Creed** - All then profess their Christian faith by reciting or singing the [Nicene Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed) (written at the Council of Nicea in 325AD) or the shorter [Apostles' Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostles%27_Creed) (believed to be written by the Apostles in the first century).

**Nicene Creed**

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
  
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Apostles’ Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.  
Amen.

1. **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

Bread and wine are ceremonially placed on the altar after a linen cloth is spread on the altar. The bread is placed on a paten and the wine, mixed with a little water is placed in a chalice. The priest says a prayer over the elements (which must be made of only wheat bread and fermented wine from grapes to be valid).

The priest says: *“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”*

The people respond: *“Blessed be God forever.”*

Then the priest says: “*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands it will become our spiritual drink..”*

The people respond: *“Blessed be God forever.”*

The priest then washes his hands to signify both purification and that something significant and holy is about to take place.

The congregation, which has been seated during this preparatory rite, rises.

The priest gives an exhortation to pray:

*"Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father."*

The people respond:   
*"May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands,   
for the praise and glory of his name, for our good,   
and the good of all his holy Church."*

The priest then prays over the gifts.

**The Eucharistic Prayer**

Priest: *"The Lord be with you"*The people respond: *“And with your spirit”*

Priest: *"Lift up your hearts."*The people respond: *"We lift them up to the Lord."*

Priest: *"Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God."*   
The people respond: *"It is right and just."*

**The Sanctus** (Isaiah 6:3 and Matt 21:9) (All recite)

*"Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord God of hosts.   
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.   
Hosanna in the highest.   
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.   
Hosanna in the highest."*

(All kneel)

**Institution Narrative**  Jesus' words and actions at his Last Supper are recalled:

Priest:   
*"On the night that He was betrayed,   
He took bread and after giving thanks, broke it,   
and gave it to His disciples saying:*

*‘Take this, all of you, and eat of it: for THIS IS MY BODY -   
which will be given up for you.’ ”*

The priest elevates the host in silence. **This is the point in the Mass that the bread becomes the Body of Christ (the miracle of Transubstantiation)**. After lowering the Body of Christ and placing back on the altar, he then kneels in humble adoration.   
  
After rising, the priest then takes the chalice and says:

*“In a similar way, when supper was ended, He took the chalice, and after giving thanks, gave it to His disciples saying: ‘Take this, all of you, and drink from it: for this is the chalice of My Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the remission of sins. Do this in memory of Me.”*

The priest elevates the chalice, at which time **the wine becomes the Blood of Christ**. After lowering the chalice containing the Blood of Christ, he then kneels in humble adoration.

**The Acclamation**

The priest then announces: *"The mystery of faith,"*

The people respond with *one* of the following responses:

-We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.   
-When we eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.  
-Save us Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.

Then the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ and says (or chants):

Through Him, and in Him, and with Him,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours  
forever and ever.

The people respond: Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**  (All recite)

*Our Father, who art in heaven,*

*hallowed be thy name;*

*thy kingdom come,*

*thy will be done*

*on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread,*

*and forgive us our trespasses,*

*as we forgive those who trespass against us;*

*and lead us not into temptation,*

*but deliver us from evil.*

*For the kingdom,*

*the power and the glory are yours,*

*now and forever.*

**The Sign of Peace**

The priest will prompt the congregation to offer each other a sign of peace. The faithful turn to those near them in the pews and offer a silent (or whispered) offering of peace, perhaps saying,   
 *"Peace be with you."*

**Breaking of the Bread**

The priest then breaks the Eucharist, elevates the broken Body of Christ, and says:

**Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)** (All recite)

“Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,   
Have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
Have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
Grant us peace.”

(All kneel)

The priest recites:

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

The people respond:

“Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof,   
but only say the word, and my soul shall be clean.”

**Distribution of Communion**

The priest receives communion, consuming the Body of Christ, and then the Blood of Christ.  
He administers the Eucharist to the deacon, and to any extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will assist in distributing Communion. Then the people approach the front of the church to receive the Eucharist.   
  
Some receive in the hand and some directly on the tongue out of reverence by not touching the Body of Christ with their hands. The Eucharist must be consumed immediately, not carried back to the pew to avoid any unworthy treatment, either accidentally or intentionally. Upon returning to their pews, the people kneel.  
  
When all have received, the priest carefully cleans the vessels that held both elements of the Eucharist. Any particles that remain are placed in the chalice, rinsed with water, and consumed.

He places in the tabernacle (often located behind the altar) any hosts that remain. A profound, extended silence is given for all to pause and reflect on the miraculous Gift that they have received.

**Concluding Rite**

Following the pause, the priest may give short announcements and then offers a closing prayer. The priest then gives a blessing which always concludes with:

The priest recites *“…….in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

while the people make the sign of the cross.

Dismissal

The priest or deacon concludes with *one* of the following:  
   
G*o forth, the Mass is ended.  
Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.   
Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.   
Go in peace. The Mass has ended.* The people respond: Thanks be to God.

Recessional

The priest and deacon leave the church in a procession accompanied by a hymn.