

## The Order of the Mass

### 1 Introductory Rites (IR)

Sign of the Cross  
Greeting  
Penitential Rite  
Gloria  
**Collect**

### 2 Liturgy of the Word (LoW)

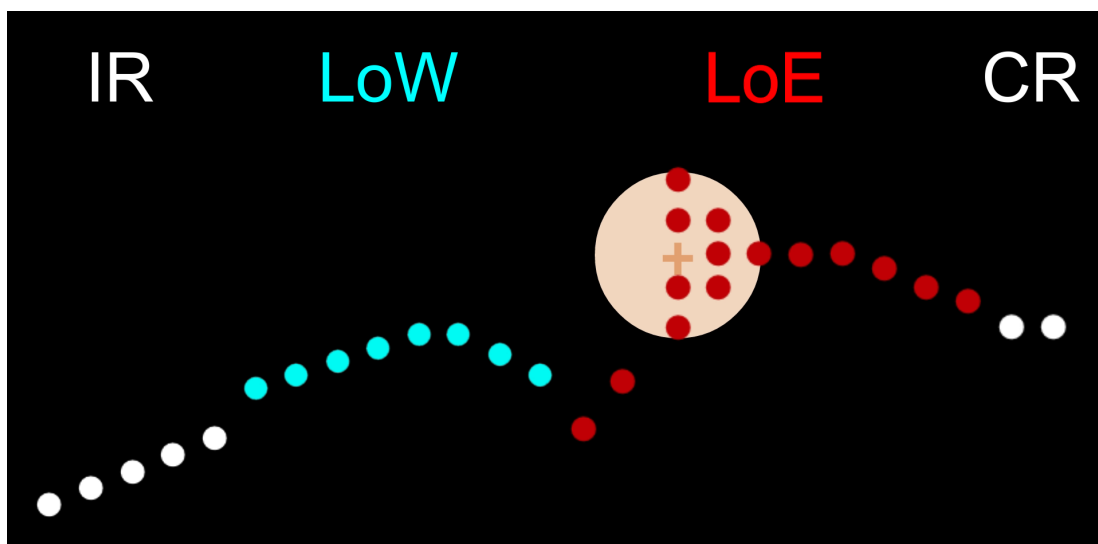
1<sup>st</sup> Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel and Homily  
Nicene Creed  
General Intercessions  
(aka Petitions, aka Universal Prayer)

### 3 Liturgy of the Eucharist (LoE)

Preparation of the Gifts  
The people bring bread and wine to the altar  
The priest presents the bread and wine to God  
The priest may incense the gifts and the altar  
Priest's penitential hand washing  
Prayer over the Offerings  
The Great Eucharistic Prayer  
Thanksgiving (expressed in the Preface)  
Holy, holy, holy  
Epiclesis (calling down upon)  
Institution Narrative and Consecration  
Anamnesis (in memory)  
Oblation (offering)  
Intercessions  
Doxology (glorifying) and Great Amen  
Communion Rite  
The Lord's Prayer  
The Rite of Peace  
The Fraction of the Bread  
Communion  
Prayer after Communion

### 4 Concluding Rites (CR)

Brief announcements, if necessary  
Greeting and Blessing  
Dismissal  
Priest and deacon kiss the altar  
All ministers make a profound bow to the altar



## The Liturgy: a story with a plot, a conversation, an offering.

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Liturgy re-tells our whole story with God, from our humble beginnings to the full relationship we have in Christ.

—God initiates everything. God loves first, creates and redeems. Our job is to love God back by letting Him love us. We respond and are redeemed. God acts, we actively receive.

—We sinned. In our shame we have tried to hide in the very place God gave us as a home (DUMB!). God still knows us and loves us but we have alienated ourselves from Him. We scarcely know who we are.

—The Introductory Rites are a preparation, an introduction and a beginning.

**Sign of the Cross.** In the Sign of the Cross, God greets us. We name the Persons of the Trinity. We trace the shape of the Cross over ourselves. The Cross is the way the Incarnate Son restored us to communion with God. Here, a pattern is set: the priest speaks and acts in the Person of Christ, the people make the priest's prayer their own by saying, "Amen."

This is the Liturgy's humble beginning. It's a little like waking up in the morning.

[Hmm. This is nice. Why does this obnoxious machine insist that I get up? Who does it think I am?]

The Sign of the Cross is a bit like God telling us our name, reminding us who we are. We have been claimed by God, marked as His with the Divine Names.

[Labeled leftovers in fridge.]

**Penitential Rite.** The first thing we need to do in the morning is get clean and presentable. [Brushing teeth.] Lord, have mercy.

[Coffee. Wow! OK, let's DO this! Let's praise God!]

**Gloria.** The Gloria is a surge of raw praise. It's a leap at heaven, so enthusiastic that it's even clumsy. Praises trip over praises, with a primal pleading mixed in. We praise God, praise the Lamb. We beg that our prayer be accepted and the God have mercy on us.

[Super Bowl 52 crowds fill the streets.]

**Collect.** For our first attempt at prayer, we're sticking to what we've got so far. The prayer is called the "Collect." It gathers us and puts us in order. The order it puts us in is what God told us in the Sign of the Cross. The Collect is addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and has a Trinitarian ending.

[Priest: "OK, people, let's get it together. Settle down and focus. Line up this way: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Let's pray. Father..."]

**1st Reading.** Now we're ready for something. But what? God takes the initiative. God talks to us and we listen. God talks to us in the words of the early days of our relationship with Him. We listen to an OT reading. (During the Easter season, we listen to a reading from the early days of the Church, the Acts of the Apostles.)

**Responsorial Psalm.** God has spoken to us. We have taken in His Word, and the Word is starting to change us. There is a quiet moment. We should say something. We should answer God's Word and then listen some more, so that a conversation takes shape. But we are still waking up to who we are and what God has done for us. We're not ready to answer God in our own words—our words are not yet reliable. We'd better stick to what God has said so far, repeating back His Word to show that we're starting to get it. That's it! We'll answer God by responding back to Him with His own Word. So we sing one of the Psalms from the Bible.

**2nd Reading.** Now we're ready to hear God more fully, in closer terms. God speaks to us in the new, definitive way, according to the new relationship God has given us in Christ. We listen as God talks to us about Jesus Christ. This is way better! Now we are being evangelized by the Apostles, the ones Jesus sent to proclaim the Good News and baptize all nations.

**Gospel Acclamation.** Someone is coming. Could it be...? Yes, Jesus Himself is coming! We rise to our feet and greet Him with praise. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
(During Lent we are chastened. We know we need a Savior. We still get to our feet and greet Him with praise but we don't say the A-word.)

**Gospel and Homily.** Now Jesus Himself speaks to us. We hear the Lord in His own Words. The Gospel is alive and well and talking to us in person.  
Wow, that was intense. We'd better sit down. We've taken in a lot. We've relived our early days with God. We've entered a deeper, more mature relationship in Jesus. We even heard the Lord Himself speak to us. This is a feast of hearing. Can somebody cut it into bites for us? Maybe lil' triangles? Can someone help us slow down, chew our food and get the full nutrition out of it? The homily breaks open the Word. Proclaiming the Gospel and preaching the Word are meant to be a single act.  
[Origen: "A homily is an informal talk on the Scriptures in the context of the Liturgy."]

**Creed.** Now we get it! We believe God. We believe what God has told us. We can now put our belief into words. We stand and profess our faith.  
The Creed is WHAT we believe. The Creed contains several central things God has revealed to us: the Trinity, Creation, the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery.  
The way we say the Creed testifies to WHOM we believe. We speak in the singular, "I believe," not as individuals but as the one Body (the Church) of our one Head (Christ). The move from "we" to "I" shows that we have a new identity in Christ. Through the Paschal Mystery, Christ has gathered fractured humanity and made it one again ("I") in His Person. This "I" is bigger than any individual, bigger than the sum of individuals. It is one with the eternal "I" of God the Son Who says, "Father, I love You back by letting You love me."

**General Intercessions (aka "Universal Prayer").** So now we are deep in conversation with God. Our relationship with God is renewed and nourished. We know God's love for us and we remember who we are in Christ. When children know they are loved, what do they do? They ask for stuff. (Conversely, any child who is afraid to ask is uncertain of being loved.) Our asking prayer is "general" or "universal" because everyone prays for everyone. This asking is an action of the general, universal priesthood of all the baptized. We ask God's help for the **Church**, the **world**, the **sick** and the **dead**. We usually add one intercession in the middle for those suffering or for a group of people who need a specific grace in order to advance in their role or mission.  
Asking is a vulnerable position. The answer is not ours to control. Furthermore, there is a vulnerability in using our own words to ask. We are asking God, and we have gone off the script for a moment. The General Intercessions show that what has happened in the Liturgy of the Word is real. The Word is affecting us. [Origen: "Scripture is as much food for the soul as the Eucharist is."]

## THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

—Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and Banquet at the Last Supper.

—Whenever the priest, acting in the Person of Christ, does what the Lord did at the Last Supper, Christ makes the Sacrifice of the Cross continuously present in the Church.

—The Lord commanded His Apostles, “Do THIS in remembrance of me.” So we bring to the altar what the Lord took in His hands at the Last Supper: bread and wine with water.

**Preparation of the Gifts.** The people bring bread and wine with water to the altar and present them to the priest. The priest presents them to God. The altar is the center of the whole Liturgy. An altar means that a sacrifice is offered. Jesus Christ is the **Sacrificial Victim** and the **Priest** Who offers the Sacrifice. Thus, the altar *means* Christ.

The people rarely hear the priest’s presenting prayers because the priest usually says them inaudibly. But when said aloud, these words have a response.

**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.**

**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.**

God gives us the earth and all the living things in it to serve our needs. We WORK with Creation, cultivating its fruitfulness. Notice what goes to the altar and is presented to God: our thanks for Creation and the fruit of our WORK. Our human dignity is involved in two ways: the dignity of being created by God, and the dignity of our effort. Work can be a drag—it is *work*, after all. Work can also flow to the altar and be consecrated.

\*\*\*As Vatican II said, **the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life and activity.**\*\*\*

The priest may **incense** the gifts placed on the altar, then the cross and the altar. Incense smells good. It goes *up*. Incense is a symbol of our prayers. We want our prayers to rise to God and please Him. We use incense to acknowledge the presence of God; a different odor for the Wholly Other.

The Preparation of the Gifts includes a preparation of the **people**. The priest prays inaudibly:

**With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.**

The Preparation of the Gifts includes a preparation of the **priest**. As a prayer for forgiveness of his **own** sins, the Priest **washes his hands** at the side of the altar. The priest prays inaudibly:

**Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

The priest only mentions *himself* in the Liturgy to say, “Sorry, God. Please wash away my sinfulness so I don’t mess up what You and your people are doing here.”

**Priest: Pray, brethren\*, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father.**

**People: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands to the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.**

\*The directions have an asterisk (\*) here, telling the priest he may change “brethren” to something similar that will make sense to the people.

**Prayer over the Gifts.** The Prayer over the Gifts then does precisely that: it asks the Lord to **accept** our sacrifice and make it **effective** in us. Notice that these are emerging as points of tension, of suspense. Of ourselves, we have no claim to God’s attention and help, no leverage over Him. So when we ask, we really ASK. And we can’t make ourselves holy, any more than we can change bread and wine into a Person. In any relationship, an openness to the other is vital. We are asking God to open us to Him.

**The Great Eucharistic Prayer** is the center and high point of the Liturgy. All versions (six or more) of the Eucharistic Prayer have these eight essential parts.

**1--Thanksgiving.** The Greek word “eucharist” means “to thank.” There are many Greek families in Philly that operate cheese steak places. When a Greek person serves you a cheese steak, the way to say “Thank you” is “*Eph charisto.*” (Note that the “ch” is soft, as in Bach, loch, mach...OK, like NO English word.) Speaking for the people, the priest thanks God for the whole work of salvation (or, depending on the season, some aspect of it).

**2--Holy, holy, holy.** The Hebrew word which we translate as “holy” is *qadosh*, which literally means “different.” God is different from us. God is absolutely Other from us. Before the throne of God in heaven, the angels sing a hymn of endless praise: “Holy, holy, holy;” “Different, different, different.” The priest and people join in their hymn. The whole Church participates: the Church on **earth**, the members who have died and are on the purifying **way** to heaven, and the Church in **heaven**.

**3--Epiclesis** (calling down upon). Holding his hands over the gifts, the priest asks the Holy Spirit to come down upon them so that the bread and wine may become the Body and Blood of the living Lord.

**4--Institution Narrative and Consecration.** By the words and actions of Christ, the sacrifice instituted by Christ at the Last Supper is effected. In other words, the Last Supper is happening right here, right now. Your watch cannot tell you what time it is, because we are in an eternal action. There is really only one Last Supper, one Mass; and we participate in it. This is the one sacrifice in which Christ offers His Body and Blood under the species (forms) of bread and wine. He gives them to His Apostles to eat and drink. He commands His Apostles to perpetuate this sacrifice.

**5--Anamnesis** (in memory). Jesus has told us exactly what He wants us to have in mind. Fulfilling the Lord’s command, we recall His Paschal Mystery (Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension). There’s more to this than just remembering facts. In the Bible, memory is effective. When God remembers Sarah, for example, His promise to her that she will have a son is fulfilled. It’s not merely looking at a picture of the past. It’s noticing that what started then is happening now. The Eucharist is the Paschal Mystery now.

**6--Oblation** (offering). This action is what we came to do. We offer the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. “As we celebrate the memorial of His Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the chalice of salvation...” Notice that the Lord builds the message “I die for you” into the Eucharist itself. If one’s body is here and one’s blood is there, one is dead. The separate appearances (the species of bread and wine) of the Eucharist proclaim His saving Death.  
[The Lord is also risen, so the whole, living Person of Christ is present in both species. Whether we receive in the form of bread or of wine or both, we receive the whole Jesus. Later, in the Fracturing Rite, there will be an expression of this truth.] \*\*\*We offer the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We offer too our lives, our whole selves.\*\*\*

**7--Intercessions.** The Eucharist is celebrated with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth. This sacrifice is offered for all her members, living and deceased. We are all called to participate in the redemption and salvation purchased for us by the Body and Blood of Christ. We offer petitions for everyone’s salvation.

**8--Doxology** (glorifying, praising). The sacrifice of Christ glorifies the Father. We express this glorification. The priest sings, “Through Him, with Him and in Him, O God Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours forever and ever.” **The people complete this prayer and make it their own with the GREAT AMEN.** Note: not an “adequate” but a GREAT AMEN.

**The Lord's Prayer.** Our Lord commanded us, "When you pray, pray this way..." We are once again participating "in memory," joining Our Lord in doing what He does. In the Lord's Prayer we ask for several things, including our daily bread (which means principally the Eucharist) and forgiveness for our sins.

The final petition of the Lord's Prayer ("deliver us from evil") is then unpacked, spelled out in detail as the priest prays the "embolism" ("Deliver us, Lord, from every evil and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy, keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.")

The people respond and complete the prayer with the doxology ("For the kingdom and the power and the glory are Yours, now and forever").

**The Rite of Peace.** Each Conference of Bishops (for us, the USCCB) determines what gesture we make as a sign of peace. At the time of this video, we're not making any sign because of COVID. The dialogue between the priest and the people is our whole Rite of Peace, for the moment.

The Rite of Peace fulfills our Lord's command in Mt 5:23-25. "If you bring your gift to the altar and then recall that someone has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and go reconcile with your brother. Then come back and offer your gift." The sign of peace is given "soberly, to those nearest us." It expresses an individual and communal desire to be reconciled.

What does that mean in normal (not under COVID) practice? It means that we don't go around the church exchanging the sign of peace with everyone. We don't reduce the sign of peace to a sign of friendship. The Rite of Peace is a time to say (in our hearts, if not aloud), "I'm sorry. Peace?" It's good to think of the people with whom we are **not** at peace, and to reach out to them in prayer. A spirit of joviality can naturally break out when we make peace, but we mustn't let the joviality overwhelm what we're actually doing in this moment: making amends!

**The Fraction of the Bread.** Participating in Christ's action at the Last Supper, the priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread. If needed, the deacon and concelebrating priests can help, so it doesn't take too long. In apostolic times, this rite gave the whole Eucharistic Action its name. We called Mass "the Breaking of the Bread." The Fraction signifies that the many faithful are made one body (1 Cor 10:17) by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life.

The priest puts a piece of the host in the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the risen, living Christ. During the Fraction, we sing "**Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world. Have mercy on us.**" We conclude, "**Grant us peace.**"

**Communion.** The priest and people pray privately that they may receive the Body and Blood of Christ fruitfully. Then the Priest shows the faithful the Eucharistic Bread, holding it over the paten or chalice, and invites them to the banquet of Christ with the words of John the Baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God..." (Jn 1:36). With the faithful, he then makes an act of humility, using the words of the Roman centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed" (Mt 8:8).

The priest is bound to receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at that same Mass. It is most desirable that the faithful do as well, as a clear sign that our Communion is a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated (1Cor 10:16).

**Prayer after Communion.** To complete the prayer of the People of God and to conclude the whole Communion Rite, the Priest pronounces the Prayer after Communion. He prays that the mystery just celebrated be **fruitful** in us. The prayer, though short, has a Trinitarian pattern.

### **Concluding Rites (CR)**

**Brief announcements**, if necessary. 'Nuff said. Our announcements are so short that we usually do them *before* the Prayer after Communion.

The priest's **Greeting** and **Blessing**.

The **Dismissal** of the people by the Deacon or the Priest, so that each may go back to doing good works, praising and blessing God.

The priest and deacon **kiss the altar**.

The priest, deacon and other ministers make a **profound bow to the altar**.