

Explanation Mass 2023 –

The Mass was explained on the weekend of May 20th and 21st

This weekend, we have a special opportunity to learn more about the Mass with an Explanation Mass. Each week, we gather together as a community to worship and celebrate what is at the heart of our faith. How and why we celebrate in this way is rich with tradition; but what does this mean for us today, and how should we participate?

These are questions that may cross our minds from time to time, so this weekend, we will offer some brief explanations throughout the liturgy to help us understand why we celebrate as we do.

Picture the Mass as a prayer with four “movements” that we can enter into.

The first is the movement of all of us coming together – **the Introductory Rites**. Imagine for a moment that you are at a restaurant with your family. You see another family that you know and greet each other. You decide to share this time together, so you pull up another table to make one large table. This is similar to the Introductory Rites; however, in the Church, **everyone** is brought around the table. In the first part of the Mass, people come from all different walks of life, enter the church, greet one another and then, take their place at God’s table where we are formed as the Body of Christ.

The second movement is from God to us in **the Liturgy of the Word**. We believe that God is present and speaking to each one of us through these words that are proclaimed. These are graced words, and they have an effect on us, if we are open. God's Word is intended to be fruitful in our lives. (Isaiah 55:10-12)

The third movement, **the Liturgy of the Eucharist**, is in the opposite direction: us toward God. You can actually see this flow when the gifts of bread and wine are carried down the aisle and brought to the altar. This altar represents Christ. We symbolically place not just the gifts but also *ourselves* on the altar. Then, in the Eucharistic prayer, we give thanks to the Father through His Son Jesus Christ for everything He has done for us in the Spirit. We are united with Christ on the Cross as He gives Himself totally to the Father and passes from death to life. Jesus is then made truly present to us in the Eucharist.

The fourth movement of the Mass is outward, beyond the walls of the Church. In the **Concluding Rite**, we are blessed and sent forth into our communities to live and proclaim the truths that we have just celebrated.

That's an overview and a way to think about the Mass as a whole. During this liturgy, we will pause briefly to consider the meaning of each of the four "movements".

So, let's begin:

The first movement...opens with the **Introductory Rites** which help to form us as the Body of Christ. The **Entrance Procession** marks a beginning to the liturgy itself. It is a visible representation of each one of us present here today bringing our minds and hearts toward God for prayer. We all participate in the procession. And the priest, in the person of Christ, in persona Christi, is gathering us around His table. We sing the Entrance Song to open the celebration and deepen our unity with Christ and His Church.

Next, we make the **Sign of the Cross** which has been practiced by Christians since the 2nd century. It is a traditional way of beginning a prayer since all salvation comes through the Cross.

Through the **Penitential Rite**, we express one of our deepest common bonds: we are all sinners and depend on God's mercy. We say, "Lord, have mercy...Christ, have mercy."

Then, we sing the **Gloria**, a song of praise, often called the song of angels, which comes right from Scripture when the angels appear to the shepherds at Christ's birth.

At the **Collect**, the opening prayer, the presider invites us to pray, and in silence we take a moment to think of those concerns we bring to this liturgy. The presider then gathers up these silent prayers in a brief

spoken prayer. With the Amen of the Collect, the Introductory Rites come to an end.

Now that we have heard about the Introductory Rites, let us experience them. Please stand and join in singing our opening song:

Part II

The second movement of the Mass is called the **Liturgy of the Word**. This is our opportunity to listen to God's Word through the reading of Sacred Scripture. When the Word of God is proclaimed at the liturgy, we are not remembering something God once said. God is speaking to us **live**, right now, through these graced words. God speaks something to each one of us in every liturgy. We don't know what it will be, or when it will come. It may be a word of consolation, or of challenge, or an insight, or something we don't know how to describe. For this to happen, we need to be open to God's Word and allow it to fall upon us in whatever way God intends. We simply sit back, open our hearts and minds, and let God speak.

The **First Reading** is almost always from the Old Testament also known as the Hebrew Scriptures. However, now, we are in the Easter season and the First Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles where we hear about the early Church.

The **Responsorial Psalm** is sung scripture from the book of Psalms. These are prayers that Jesus grew up on and many were written by King David, himself.

The **Second Reading** is almost always taken from one of the letters of the New Testament. Most of them are written by St. Paul but other letters are written by apostles like St. Peter and St. John.

We then stand to sing the **Gospel Acclamation** as it prepares us to hear Jesus' words in the Gospel. We trace a cross on our forehead, lips, and heart so that the Words of Christ penetrate our minds, fall on our lips and enter our hearts. The Lord is truly present in our midst through His Words. Notice that Father Andrew quietly gives the deacon a blessing to prepare him to read the Gospel. Father Andrew prays over the deacon saying, "May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips as you proclaim the Gospel to His People."

Then, the **homily or message** that follows is intended to illuminate the words proclaimed. After the homily, we stand together to profess our faith with the **Creed**; this is a statement of what we believe as Catholic Christians.

Finally, we have the **Prayers of the Faithful** also known as the Universal Prayer or General Intercessions. Here, we respond to the Word of God by praying not only for our own needs, but also for the needs of the whole Church and the whole world.

During this past year in honor of the National Eucharistic Revival, we have been praying the **Eucharistic Revival prayer**. It is intended to recall and strengthen our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and the positive effect the Eucharist has in our lives. As we receive this gift and are nourished by it, we are called to spread the Good News of this message to others.

With the “Amen” of the prayer, the Liturgy of the Word comes to an end.

Part III

Now we enter into the third movement of the Mass. In the **Liturgy of the Word**, the flow was “God toward us.” Now, in the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**, we move toward God and place ourselves on the altar with Christ.

In the **Preparation of the Gifts**, we are preparing ourselves to “do” what Christ did in His dying and rising, that is, to give ourselves entirely into God’s hands. The reality is, on any given day, each of us stand before all the needs that surround us – family, friends, job, finances, unfinished tasks, personal struggles – and say what the disciples said: “Lord, I don’t have enough to take care of all this.” In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Lord says to us, “Bring me what you’ve got.” We do. The bread and wine are processed down the aisle and brought to the altar. Carrying up the gifts continues the spiritual value and meaning of the ancient custom

when the people brought bread and wine for the liturgy from their homes.

When the gifts are brought forward, we are invited to consciously place ourselves on the altar with them. Once the gifts are on the altar, the priest invites the assembly to pray that they will be an acceptable sacrifice. And we are also praying that we ourselves will be accepted with Christ as He lifts Himself up to the Father. Through the Eucharistic Prayer, the gifts are blessed, and God gives them back to us in Communion.

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest speaks on behalf of the entire assembly to God, and we respond with acclamations along the way. From beginning to end, the Eucharistic Prayer is addressed to God the Father – not to the assembly, not to the bread and wine, but to God the Father. Furthermore, the priest never says “I;” he always says “we.” We are not spectators to the Mass; we are called to actively participate in the Mass together with the priest.

In the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest unites **all of us** to the sacrifice of Christ. He says: “God our Father, **we** remember with joy all that Jesus did to save us. In this holy sacrifice, which he gave as a gift to his Church, **we** remember his Death and Resurrection. Father in heaven, accept **us** together with your beloved Son. He willingly died for us, but you raised

him to life again.” Christ is present and we join with Him as, with great trust, He gives Himself completely to the Father.

The Eucharistic Prayer ends with the **Great Amen** and we are led into the **Communion Rite**.

The first part of the Communion Rite is the **Our Father** also known as the **Lord’s Prayer**. This prayer that Jesus gave us has been part of the Communion Rite since the 4th century because it speaks of bread and forgiveness.

The **Sign of Peace** was common among early Christians. It is placed after the Lord’s Prayer to connect with the words, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It is important for us to note that we are extending the Lord’s peace who is present among us in this liturgy.

After the Sign of Peace, we sing the **Lamb of God**, as the priest breaks the Bread. This Bread that we eat and the Cup that we drink become for us spiritual food and drink for our journey to God. Before we come forward to receive Communion, we acknowledge our unworthiness before God as well as our trust in His healing power: “Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

As we approach the priest or Eucharist minister, they will say, “The Body of Christ...the Blood of Christ.” Our response of “Amen” as we receive

the Body and Blood is one of the most important Amens we ever say. We are saying, “I believe.”

- We are saying “Amen” to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
- We are saying “Amen” to the transformative presence of the dying and rising Lord *into our life right now*.

After receiving Communion, we pray silently.

Part IV

In a moment, the Communion Rite in the Liturgy of the Eucharist will conclude with the prayer after communion said by the priest. Our “Amen” here closes the Communion Rite and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

We now approach the last of the four segments of commentary for today’s liturgy, the **Concluding Rite**. It is through this rite that we move outward, out beyond these church walls and into the spaces where we live our lives. The priest asks God’s blessing over the entire assembly. Then we are called to go forth to love and serve the Lord by the witness of our lives. Now transformed by the Eucharist, we are called to live what we just proclaimed and celebrated.