

All you need to know about...
The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist



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What is it and what is the purpose of the Holy Eucharist?

- The Holy Eucharist is described as “the source and summit of the Christian life.”¹ This is because it is at the very centre of the practice of the Catholic faith.
- The Holy Eucharist is the name given to the bread and wine which are transformed into the body & blood of Jesus. This transformation (transubstantiation) takes place during the celebration of the Mass.
- The Holy Eucharist is consumed during Mass by all those eligible to receive it.
- Through the celebration of the Mass we commemorate the Last Supper and enter in to Jesus’ sacrifice at Calvary and his glorious resurrection. This is more than a remembrance: we become part of that event.
- In receiving Holy Communion we are united with Christ in a physical way and we enter more fully in to the Body of Christ. The more we receive Christ the more Christ-like we become.
- The Holy Eucharist is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church. As “the source and summit” of our faith the other sacramental celebrations lead us to the Eucharist.
- It is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation into the Church which are necessary for people to become full members of the Church. The other two Sacraments of Initiation are the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.
- The Holy Eucharist derives from a Greek word which means ‘thanksgiving’.
- The Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist is also referred to as Holy Communion, Corpus Christi, the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Eucharist and the Precious Blood.

How did the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist originate?

- The Holy Eucharist was instituted by Jesus. This happened at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:14-15) when Jesus was possibly sharing the Passover Meal with his disciples.

“While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. ‘Take and eat it,’ he said; ‘this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. ‘Drink it, all of you.’ He said, ‘this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins.’ ”

These are the words and gestures now used by the priest who, in the person of Christ presides over the Holy Eucharist during the consecration.

- The transformation of the bread and wine takes place during the Eucharistic prayer after the ‘epiclesis’ when the Holy Spirit is called upon the gifts to become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- The bread eaten at the Last Supper was unleavened bread shared as part of the Passover Feast which Jesus and his disciples were possibly celebrating. This celebration remembers the events told in the Old Testament Book of Exodus where the Jewish people escaped from slavery in Egypt. Their departure from Egypt was so rapid that God instructed them to take no leavened bread (bread with yeast) with them. Thus, since the Exodus, as part of their observance of the Passover, people of the Jewish faith do not eat leavened bread.
- During his ministry Jesus gives many indications of what is to come: not only that he will die and rise again but that through this act of sacrifice he brings us eternal life. He tells us that we can be further strengthened and nourished by receiving him in a tangible way through the Eucharistic Feast. He also uses imagery and metaphors and performs miracles which all signpost towards this momentous event.

Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6:35-36): Jesus declares himself as the ‘Bread of Life.’ The discussion which takes place at this time makes reference to another event in the Old Testament: Manna in the desert (Exodus 16:1-18). Having escaped slavery in Egypt Moses led the Jewish people in to the desert where they remained for 40 years. God provided them food by sending them manna (bread from heaven) each day. Manna could not be stored and therefore had to be collected daily. Jesus describes himself as bread which will give eternal life and not just daily sustenance.

The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-11): Jesus transforms water into wine. This is his first miracle and, having witnessed it, Jesus’ disciples ‘believed in him.’

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-13): in this miracle Jesus not only transforms five loaves and two fish which feeds the entire crowd but afterwards there are twelve baskets of bread left over.

¹ Lumen Gentium referenced in the Catechism www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand (Matthew 15: 32-38, Mark 8:1-10): A similar account is repeated in these two Gospels.

Jesus' teaching about prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4): In teaching his disciples Jesus prays the prayer now commonly known as the Our Father or The Lord's Prayer. In this prayer we pray "Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Thus linking the idea of Jesus, whom we receive in the form of bread, to the forgiveness of sins.

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35): following the Resurrection it is only when Jesus says the blessing and breaks the bread that the disciples recognise him and realise he has risen from the dead.

Breakfast on the Shore (John 21: 1-14): This is the third occasion on which Jesus appears to the disciples following his resurrection and again, the narrative describes Jesus taking bread and sharing it with them.

- Following Jesus' resurrection and ascension in to Heaven the members of the Early Church focus upon the sharing of bread as being an intrinsic part of their communities' life.

Pentecost (Acts 2: 41-42): The conclusion to the Pentecost account describes how the believers share in the life of the Church.

St. Paul's Visit to Troas: (Acts 20:7-11), *The Storm at Sea* (Acts 27: 35-37) are examples of how the sharing of the meal were part of the lives of the newly established Church.

I Corinthians (10:16-17) St. Paul describes how, through Holy Communion, we are united as a Church.

I Corinthians (11:23-26) St. Paul retells the story of the Institution of the Sacrament and its significance for the Church.

When does the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist take place for the first time?

- Communicants can receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time any time after they have reached the age of reason, seen by the Church as aged seven. The bishop or archbishop of each Diocese makes the decision as to when. In the Archdiocese of Birmingham children receive Holy Communion during the year in which they are 7 years old (Y3).
- The Holy Eucharist is usually received within the context of the celebration of the Mass.
- Traditionally First Holy Communion is celebrated in the summer either during the Season of Easter or on or around the Feast of Corpus Christi.
- Adults who are received in to the Church generally receive Holy Communion for the first time during the Easter Vigil Mass celebrated on Holy Saturday night.
- First Holy Communion is seen as a Parish celebration and it is usual for the children of the parish to receive the Sacrament together. In some Parishes this will take place at one of the Sunday Masses or at an additional Mass. Alternatively this may be spread over a number of Masses to accommodate all those wishing to participate in the celebration.

When does the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist take place?

- The sacrifice of the Mass which makes the Holy Eucharist present is celebrated every day except on Good Friday and Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil.
- The Holy Eucharist is usually received within the context of the celebration of the Mass. However, in some circumstances where a priest is unavailable to celebrate a weekday Mass, a Eucharistic Service may take place instead (Please note, that Eucharistic services should not take place instead of a school Mass).
- Those who are ill or too frail to attend Mass may receive Holy Communion at home or in hospital. Holy Communion is brought to them by a priest or deacon or an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist.

Where does the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist take place?

- Mass is usually celebrated in Church. This is because the Church is the meeting place where the community comes together and it contains everything which is required for the celebration of Mass.
- Mass can also be celebrated in other buildings such as school halls and hospitals as well as outdoors. Some buildings such as hospitals have a chapel within them.
- Most churches and some chapels will have a tabernacle inside them where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament is indicated by the Sanctuary Lamp being lit close to the tabernacle.

Can anyone receive the Holy Eucharist?

- Only baptised Catholics who have also received the Sacrament of Reconciliation may receive Holy Communion.

- Those wishing to receive Holy Communion must be in a state of grace. This means they are free from mortal or serious sin.
- You can only receive Holy Communion if you have upheld the Eucharistic Fast which means you have neither eaten food nor drink an hour prior to receiving.
- Holy Communion can also be received at a Eucharistic Service. Here the host has already been consecrated and therefore the celebration is not a Mass.
- Those who are unable to attend Mass can still receive Holy Communion brought to them by Eucharistic Ministers.

How many times can you receive the Holy Eucharist?

- Members of the Church can attend Mass and receive Holy Communion every day if they wish.
- However, the precepts of the Church require Catholics to go to Mass every Sunday (or the Saturday Vigil Mass) and all Holy Days of Obligation. Sundays are the day upon which Christians celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Attending a weekday Mass cannot replace the requirement to attend Sunday Mass.
- You can receive Holy Communion twice in the same day.

Who can celebrate Mass?

- Only an ordained bishop or priest is able to consecrate the bread and wine during the celebration of Mass.

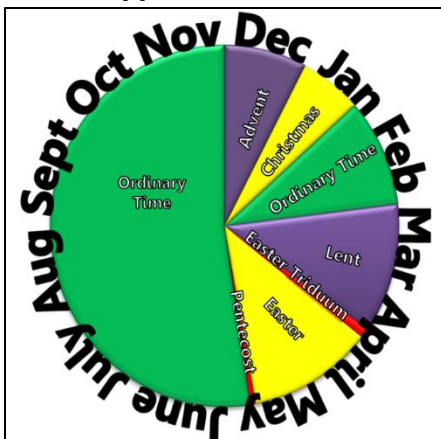
Who has to be present at the Sacrament of the The Holy Eucharist?

- A priest can celebrate Mass on his own although this should not be the norm.
- All members of the community should participate in the celebration of Mass as required by the precepts of the Church (Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation).
- Other people may carry out other specific ministries as part of the celebration of Mass e.g. Deacon, altar servers, readers, Eucharistic Ministers.
- Non-Catholics can also attend Mass. They may be invited to receive a blessing at the time of Holy Communion.

Are any special clothes worn?

- Those who are ordained as bishop, priest or deacon will wear the vestments of their office.
- For a bishop these will include the Mass vestments worn by any priest and a cross, a mitre on his head and a ring on his finger. The ring is a sign of his fidelity to the Church and the mitre a sign of his teaching office. The bishop may also carry a crozier as a sign of his pastoral care for the People of God.
- A Priest will be vested with Mass vestments. Over his alb he will wear the stole worn around his neck as a sign of the office of priesthood and a chasuble. These vestments in a special way denote that in celebrating the Sacraments he has become by virtue of ordination, "another Christ."
- A deacon will be vested with the vestments of a deacon. Over his alb he will wear a stole crossing his left shoulder and the dalmatic over his body. These vestments indicate the servant nature of Christ's ministry.
- The colour of the stole and chasuble worn by the clergy varies according to the Liturgical Season
- Local customs and traditions surround the First Holy Communion of children but there are no requirements or specifications about what should be worn.

What happens at Mass?



An Introduction to the Mass: The Liturgical Year

The Liturgical Year is the name given to the seasons of the Church year through which Christians commemorate the life, the death and the resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Each season reveals part of that story of his life through readings and prayers, and signs and symbols used in the celebration of Mass and other forms of prayer and liturgical celebrations. The mood and tone of each particular season is reinforced through the Liturgical colours, signs and symbols and prayers of that season.

Whilst the main focus of the Liturgical year is upon unfolding the story of Christ, the Church also commemorates other key people and events such as the saints and martyrs and Our Lady, the Mother of Christ.

"The liturgical cycle starts with Advent, a time of preparation for Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of our Lord. After Christmas there is a short period of ordinary time before Lent, the period of penance and preparation leading up to Easter. The Easter

Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday) commemorate the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. Eastertide lasts until Pentecost. After this there is a long period of ordinary time until the end of the liturgical year.”²

“In order to help us to enter into the cycle of the year the Church uses different colours for different seasons.

WHITE is used during the Easter and Christmas season, on Trinity Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord (other than his passion) such as Ascension, Corpus Christi, Christ the King, celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrations of the Holy Angels and of Saints who were not martyrs, on the feasts of All Saints, the Birth of John the Baptist, St John the Evangelist, the chair of St Peter and the Conversion of St Paul.

RED is used on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, on celebrations of the Lord’s Passion, on the Feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists, on celebrations of martyr saints.

PURPLE or violet are used in Advent and Lent and may also be used in Masses for the Dead

ROSE may be used on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

GREEN is used throughout Ordinary Time”³

The seasons of the Church are reflected in the cycle of readings from Scripture for Sunday and Weekday Mass.

Sunday Readings follow a three year cycle (Years A, B and C):-

Year A Ordinary Sunday Gospel readings focus on the Gospel of Matthew.

Year B Ordinary Sunday Gospel readings focus on the Gospel of Mark.

Year C Ordinary Sunday Gospel readings focus on the Gospel of Luke.

The Gospel of John is used on particular occasions throughout the whole cycle.

Weekday Masses in Ordinary Time follow a two-year cycle: Year I for years ending with an odd number and Year II for years ending with an even number. Over the two years various books from the Old Testament and letters from the New Testament are read. Each year the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are read in turn. On the weekdays of Advent, Lent and Eastertide the readings appropriate to the season are used.

There is a hierarchical structure to the different Mass celebrations said throughout the year according to whom or what is being celebrated:

Sundays are the Lord’s Day. Each and every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus’ resurrection. This is why Catholics are obliged to go to Mass every Sunday (or the Vigil Mass on Saturday).

Holy Days of Obligation are additional days on which Catholics are obliged to go to Mass. These include the Solemnities of All Saints (1 November), Ss. Peter & Paul (29 June) and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 August). Other Holy Days which celebrate the events in Jesus’ life such as the Solemnities of the Epiphany, the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost have now been transferred to Sundays by the Bishops of England and Wales.

Solemnities are days on which significant events or people in the Church’s history are commemorated. Not all solemnities are Holy Days of Obligation although the Mass which is said on these days will include all the features of a Sunday Mass rather than a weekday Mass. Examples of such Solemnities are St. Joseph (19 March) and The Annunciation of the Lord (25 March). Note that when this sort of solemnity falls on a Sunday it is transferred to another day as it cannot take precedence over a Sunday. Some Solemnities will be particular to a country e.g. St. George (23 April).

Feasts are the days on which specific saints are commemorated or less significant moments in the life of Christ. Again, these days are not Holy Days of Obligation and carry less importance than solemnities. The Mass said on Feast Days will have specific readings rather than the weekday readings and the Gloria will be said/sung. Some Feasts may be particular to a Diocese such as St. Chad (3 March), one of the patron saints of the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Memorials are days when saints of the universal Church are commemorated. The Mass which is celebrated will be an ordinary weekday Mass so the Gloria and the Second Reading would not occur but the readings would be specific for that saint e.g. St Francis of Assisi (4 October). Memorials will also include the saints who are particular to a Diocese such as St. Nicholas Owen.

Ferias are ordinary weekday Masses to which nothing has been assigned. The readings for these Masses are the readings of the day.

² www.catholicchurch.org.uk

³ <http://rcdow.org.uk/att/files/faith/catechesis/seasonal%20resources/cycleofthechurchyear.pdf>

The Ordo⁴ is published at the start of the Liturgical Year and contains all the necessary information. The Liturgy Office⁵ has an online National Ordo and calendar which is also available as a PDF. Please note that the online calendar is not specific to the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Roles during Mass

The **role of the Priest** is to preside over the celebration of Mass and to lead the congregation or assembly gathered. During the celebration of Mass the priest acts in the person of Christ and therefore teaches the people through the homily and offers the sacrifice of the Mass with them.

The **role of the Deacon** during the celebration of Mass is to proclaim the Gospel and to assist the priest at the chair and the altar. On occasions he may be invited to deliver the homily and it is his responsibility to announce the general intercessions. During the distribution of Holy Communion he normally acts as the minister of the chalice.

The **role of the Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist** is to assist the priest and deacon in the distribution of Christ's Body and Blood at Holy Communion.

The **role of the Altar Servers** is to take part in the celebration of the Mass by leading the entrance and concluding processions with cross, acolyte candles and thurible. They hold the book for the priest at the chair, they may assist the priest or deacon with the preparation of the altar and gifts. This may include holding water and wine for the preparation of the chalice and bring water and a jug and towel for the priest to wash his hands. Other duties might include holding lighted torches during the Eucharistic prayer and the ringing of the sanctuary bell at the elevation of the Body and Blood of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer.

The **Readers** proclaim the First and Second reading at the celebration of Mass. The Responsorial Psalm should normally be sung by a cantor. When there is no Deacon the reader may announce the general intercessions.

The **role of the Assembly/Congregation**: The Liturgy demands the full, conscious and active participation of all those present. They should engage in the dialogue between themselves and the ministers and take part in the communal acclamations. Singing is one of the most important expressions to develop communal participation. Time for silent reflection enables the assembly to engage more deeply in the mystery that is being celebrated and the uniformity of gesture expresses a spirit of unity and purpose.

⁴ Archdiocese of Birmingham Ordo available from St. Paul's Bookshop at St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

⁵ The Liturgy Office www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/ www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/2017/index.shtml

The Structure of the Mass

There are four distinct parts which make up the Mass: The Introductory Rite, The Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rite.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The purpose of the Introductory Rites are to gather the people together as the Family of God and to prepare us to hear the Word of God and participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and in normal circumstances to receive Holy Communion.

Upon entering the Church people will bless themselves with Holy water from the stoop. Before entering a pew people genuflect (kneel) towards the tabernacle as a mark of respect. People will kneel or sit in silent prayer until the sacristy bell is rung to show that Mass is about to begin.

Entrance Procession

Sunday Mass begins with a procession and the singing of the Entrance Hymn or if there is no hymn the Entrance Antiphon is said. The hymn should be relevant to the Season and/or Feast or reminding us of what we are about to celebrate. The Antiphon is prescribed in the Roman Missal. Weekday Masses may have a less formal entrance procession and do not always include hymns.

The people stand during the procession. The altar servers lead carrying incense, the Processional Cross and candles. The Book of the Gospels is carried by the deacon or a lay person. The priest is last in the procession and may be accompanied by a deacon. The priest and other ministers bow to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and then proceed around the altar venerating it with a kiss. Incense may be used to purify the altar. The thurible, processional cross and acolyte candles remind us that in the Mass we gather to honour and worship God. Incense is used to reverence the altar, where we celebrate the sacrifice of Christ, and it is used to honour the book of Gospels as we prepare to meet Christ in the Gospel. The Book of the Gospels is held aloft in the Entrance Procession to remind us that we are gathering to listen to the Word of God. The acolyte candles are a sign of honour to Christ the Light of the World.

On some special celebrations other symbolic objects may be brought up as part of the Entrance Procession.

- The priest faces the people, makes the Sign of the Cross and greets them.

The greeting and response **“The Lord be with you” “And with your spirit.”** is used for the first time. It occurs four times within the Mass. This is to emphasise the four high points of the Mass which acknowledge the presence of Christ. At a Mass celebrated by a Bishop the greeting is: “Peace be with you.”

Penitential Act

The next part of the Mass is a phase of preparation to make us ready to listen to the Scripture readings as well as to be ready to receive Holy Communion. Here we reflect on our own behaviour and ask God for his mercy.

- The first part of the Penitential Act is said:

There are three options for this:

1. The Confiteor said together through which we acknowledge our own failings and we call upon the Communion of Saints (all those who have been baptised both past and present) to intercede for us.
 2. A short prayer to which the people respond taken from penitential psalms
 3. A series of prayers to which the people respond. The form is that of a Litany.
- This is followed by a prayer of absolution before the Lord have Mercy (Kyrie Eleison) is said/sung (unless the third option has been used which already the Lord have mercy)

The Gloria

- The Gloria is sung/said

Having called to mind our sins and asked for forgiveness the Gloria is now sung or said. This is a hymn in which we give praise to God. Note that it begins with the same words spoken by the angels when they announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds (Luke 2: 13-14). The Gloria is sung/said on Sundays, Holydays and important Solemnities and Feasts. It is not sung/said on weekdays nor during the Seasons of Advent and Lent.

The Collect

- This opening prayer is said by the priest and varies according to the season and the day.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Everyone now sits down to listen to the proclamation of the Scripture Readings. Being seated is the same posture we adopt when we are in a place of learning. It is comfortable but allows us to be attentive and enables us to see the person who is speaking.

First Reading

- The First Reading is read

The First Reading at Sunday Mass is usually taken from the Old Testament. There are exceptions to this such as during the Easter period where the readings are taken from the Acts of the Apostles. This reading will link, in some way, to the Gospel reading. The reading is usually done by a member of the congregation.

Responsorial Psalm

- The Psalm is sung/said

The Responsorial Psalm which follows is so called because it is a response to the First Reading and not because there is a response in it. It should usually be sung. The psalms come from the Old Testament Book of Psalms.

Second Reading

- The Second Reading is read

The Second Reading only occurs on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. These are taken from one of the letters of the Apostles or from the Book of Revelation. As the second reading follows its own cycle there is not usually a link between this reading and that of the Gospel reading.

The Gospel Acclamation

Because of its central importance to the Liturgy of the Word the people stand to hear the Gospel. When standing we are 'standing to attention'. When listening to the Gospel we should be at our most attentive. It is also a more formal posture of respect.

- The Gospel Acclamation is said/sung by all

The Gospel Acclamation begins with the singing of the 'Alleluia'. In this word the people express both their joy and their desire to welcome the Gospel which is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. Altar servers with candles stand at either side of the lectern/ambo. Incense may also be used.

In Lent the Gospel acclamation is not accompanied by 'Alleluia' in order to express the solemnity of the Season.

The Gospel

- The greeting and response **"The Lord be with you" "And with your spirit."** is used for the second time
- The priest/deacon announces which Gospel is to be read

As this is done people then make the Sign of the Cross on their foreheads lips and chest. This is as a sign of desire that the Word of God be in our minds, on our lips and in our hearts. The reading comes from one of the four Gospels according to the liturgical cycle of readings.

- When the reading has ended the priest/deacon acclaim "The Gospel of the Lord." As the people respond "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." he kisses the book.

These words and actions are further signs of reverence to the Word.

The Homily

The Homily is when the priest/deacon speaks to the people. It is based on the readings we have just heard and gives us further understanding and insight into the Word of God. Sometimes the Archbishop/Bishop will send a letter which is to be read to the people by way of a homily. This is known as a pastoral letter.

The people are seated during the homily.

The Creed

- The Creed is said

The Creed is a profession of the beliefs of our faith "in all God has done, is doing, and will yet do." (Liturgy Made Simple) The Creed said at Mass is the Nicene Creed. The Creed is said on Sundays and Solemnities but not on weekdays. The Apostles' Creed may be used during Lent and Easter time. On occasions the Renewal of Baptismal Promises take place. This is another form of our profession of faith.

Prayer of the Faithful

- The Prayer of the Faithful are read and each prayer is followed by a response

In the Prayer of the Faithful (Bidding prayers) (General Intercessions) the people are “invited to pray for the concerns of Church and the world” (Liturgy Office). There is a set structure for these prayers.

1. We pray for the needs of the Church (as in the universal Church not our local Church community)
2. We pray for the world
3. We pray for those in need
4. We pray for the local community.

We do not address these prayers specifically to God/Our Lord; rather each prayer begins ‘We ask...’ or ‘We pray...’ or ‘For the Church... There are various responses which may be used including ‘Lord, in your mercy’ ‘Hear our prayer’ and ‘We pray to the Lord’ ‘Lord, hear our prayer’.

Traditionally, in England and Wales, the last intention asks for the intercession of Our Lady and is followed by the ‘Hail Mary’.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The focus of the Mass now centres on The Liturgy of the Eucharist and begins with the preparation of the altar. The corporal, purificators and the Missal are placed on the altar.

The Presentation of the Gifts (Offertory Procession)

- Members of the congregation bring up the gifts of bread and wine and any real gifts for the poor

The Offertory now takes place accompanied by a suitable hymn. The people are seated during this.

The bread and wine and the money donated during the collection are taken to the sanctuary and are accepted by the priest. The bread and wine are placed on the altar but the collection is placed elsewhere. No other gifts or symbolic items should be brought to the altar at this point of the Mass.

A small white cloth known as a corporal is also unfolded on the altar. This is to ensure that no fragments of the Blessed Sacrament are lost.

The gifts of bread and wine brought to the altar, alongside the ministers and the people, may be revered with incense as a sign of our offerings, of ourselves and of our prayers ascending to heaven and being joined to the sacrifice of Christ that we celebrate in the Holy Eucharist.

Preparation of the Gifts

- The priest washes his hands
- The priest raises the paten with the bread and says the prayer of praise to God
- This is repeated with the chalice of wine and a little water

In these prayers the priest gives thanks to God the Creator for his goodness towards us.

The Eucharistic Prayer

- The greeting and response “**The Lord be with you**” “**And with your spirit.**” is used for the third time
- The people stand to join in the response. It signifies that we are entering into the most important part of the Mass.

Sanctus/Holy, Holy

- The sanctus is said/sung by all

The words of the Sanctus or Holy, Holy are taken from Isaiah 6:3 and again are an expression of giving glory to God. Following this prayer the people kneel. This posture is one of great reverence. In the same way that the shepherds and Wise Men knelt before the baby Jesus in the stable as a sign of adoration before the king we too do the same.

- The priest continues to pray the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is said over the gifts. It is a prayer of thanksgiving. There are four different Eucharistic Prayers as well as Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions and Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children.

The Consecration of the Gifts (known as the Institution Narrative)

- The priest continues to say the Eucharistic Prayer and calls down the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The words of institution or the consecration are said by the priest who acts in the person of Christ. The Holy Spirit is asked to make the bread and wine holy and to consecrate it. At this point the priest uses the invocation gesture over the gifts by placing his hands over the paten and chalice, palms down.

- The priest continues to say the Eucharistic Prayer using the words of Jesus at the Last Supper
- He shows the consecrated Body & Blood to the people. As he does so the sanctuary bell is rung.
- The priest genuflects before the Blessed Sacrament

In the Institution Narrative and Consecration the words and actions of Our Lord from the Last Supper are recited. The use of the bell dates back to the time when Mass was said in Latin. This would enable those present at Mass to acknowledge the moment of consecration. At this point the bread and wine have become the Body and Blood of Our Lord and should no longer be referred to as bread and wine but as the Blessed Sacrament or the Body and Blood of Our Lord.

Memorial Acclamation

- The Memorial Acclamation is said/sung

The **Memorial Acclamation** which follows is an expression of faith in the Paschal Mystery by all the people gathered together. There are three options for the Memorial Acclamation which may be sung/said.

- The priest continues to say the Eucharist Prayer.

In the intercessions in this part of the prayer which follow we pray that “the fruits of this Sacrifice may be experienced throughout the Church and the world”⁶. The priest prays for the Pope and Bishop and seeks the intercession of Our Lady and St. Joseph and the saints.

The Doxology

- The priest says the Doxology and the congregation respond with the acclamation of the Great Amen.

The **Doxology** is a prayer to the Trinity and is said by the priest. It concludes the Eucharistic prayer which has been addressed to the Father, through the Son and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The congregation respond with their acclamation of the **Great Amen**.

THE COMMUNION RITE

This part of the Mass is to prepare the congregation to receive Holy Communion. The people stand.

The Lord’s Prayer

- The Our Father/Lord’s Prayer is said by all

The Lord’s Prayer is said and it acknowledges God as Father and provider of all that we need. It also acknowledges the mercy of the Father. In it we also ask not to be put to the test but to be kept safe from harm.

The Sign of Peace

- The priest/deacon invite us to make the sign of peace with one another: ‘The peace of the Lord be with you always’ ‘And with your spirit.’

The local custom in England & Wales is to then offer peace to one another through a handshake and the words ‘Peace be with you’. Through this gesture we acknowledge each other as brothers and sisters in the family of God and as “an acknowledgement that Christ whom we receive in the Sacrament is already present in our neighbour”⁷

Lamb of God/Agnus Dei & The Breaking of the Bread

- The Lamb of God is said/sung by the people
- At the same time the priest breaks a small piece from the host and places it in the chalice

The Breaking of Bread occurs when the priest takes the Host and breaks it placing a small piece of the host into the chalice. This stems from the early days of the Church when the Mass was only celebrated in one place and the Sacrament was taken out to other places. The host therefore had to be divided up in order for it to be shared with the different communities.

As this action takes place the Lamb of God or Agnus Dei is said or sung. This prayer acknowledges that through Jesus’ sacrifice he has taken away our sin.

After this prayer has finished the people kneel.

Invitation to Communion

The Invitation to Communion is preceded by the private prayer of the priest. This is followed by an invitation and response based upon Matthew 8:9. when Jesus meets a centurion.

⁶ ‘Celebrating the Mass’ 2005 Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/CTM.pdf>

⁷ ibid

- The priest holds the consecrated host inviting us to share in Communion “Behold the Lamb of God...”
- 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 healed.”

On this occasion a centurion approached Jesus asking him to heal his servant who was ill. When Jesus asks to be taken to the servant he responds with “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” In repeating his words the people are expressing their absolute faith in the power and mercy of the Jesus and their desire to be united with him through receiving the Holy Eucharist.

Communion Procession

- The priest and Eucharistic Ministers distribute Holy Communion from the foot of the Sanctuary.
- The priest may also place some consecrated hosts in a pyx which is taken by himself, a deacon or a Eucharistic Minister to give to those too ill to come to Church.

Those going to receive Holy Communion or a blessing join the Communion Procession to the altar. Holy Communion may be received on the hand or the tongue. It is important that those receiving Holy Communion do so when they are still and facing the altar. It is not necessary to make the Sign of the Cross after receiving Holy Communion but local custom may determine this. Those who are unable to receive Holy Communion should place their arm across their chest onto their shoulder to indicate that they wish to receive a blessing. A Communion hymn or suitable music may be played during the distribution of Holy Communion.

After Holy Communion the altar is cleared and all the vessels are purified. All of the Precious Blood must be consumed. This is sometimes done at a separate table or, if on the altar, at the side of the altar. This is done carefully to ensure that no fragments of the Blessed Sacrament are lost (After Mass all the linens used in the celebration of Mass will be washed, dried and ironed. This is done in a specific way in order that any remainders of the Blessed Sacrament, however small, are handled appropriately and with absolute reverence). Any remaining Consecrated Hosts are placed in the tabernacle.

- The priest and all those on the altar genuflect towards the tabernacle

Once the tabernacle has been closed the people may choose to sit or remain kneeling in silent prayer.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

- The greeting and response “**The Lord be with you**” “**And with your spirit.**” is used for the fourth time
- The priest blesses the people
- The priest or deacon dismisses the people “Go, forth, the Mass is ended” who respond “Thanks be to God.”

In The Concluding Rite the priest blesses the people. The people are then dismissed by the priest/deacon with the words one of four options as a reminder that having received the Body of Christ they live as and take the Body of Christ into the world.

Recessional Procession

- The priest and all those who have served on the altar leave the sanctuary

There is usually a Recessional hymn which allows those ministers on the altar to process out before the people leave.

If you’d like to find out more about the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist you can...

- Watch some short film clips about different aspects of the Mass. The clips feature Bishop Christopher Coyne on the Catholic TV Network from a series ‘Everything you wanted to know about Catholic Liturgy’ <http://www.catholicstv.com/shows/everything-you-wanted-know-about-catholic-liturgy>
- Watch a short video www.bustedhalo.com/video/sacraments-201-eucharist-what-we-believe
- Sophia SketchPad: The Eucharist is an animated video which explains the Sacrament www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcB7Uem00n4
- read more about it in ‘Youcat’ (‘Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church’) available from CTS
- read more about it in the ‘Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church’ available from CTS
- watch the CaFE DVD ‘First Holy Communion and Reconciliation’ available from www.faithcafe.org/collections/first-holy-communion
- read more in ‘The Catholic Source Book’ Harcourt Religion Publishers

Planning and Preparing a Mass

It is an expectation that teachers in Catholic schools should be able to plan and prepare a Mass. Your RE Subject Leader and your Parish priest will support you with this. There is a Sunday Mass planner template and a Weekday Mass Planner template available below.

Before you begin check the Ordo (the Diocesan book which contains the calendar for Mass) to see on which day the Mass is being celebrated and whether it is a Solemnity, Feast, Memorial or Feria. Don't forget to check which season it is. The Ordo will also indicate the colour of the vestments to be worn on each day.

Children do need to be given readings in advance in order to practice. However, Mass is not a performance and should not be over rehearsed.

Do ensure that all the children have washed their hands before going to Mass.

Check List	Check the Ordo before you start planning to find out what the readings of the day are.	
Sunday Mass & Holy Days		Weekday Mass
INTRODUCTORY RITE		
Entrance Procession:	Entrance Procession: Consider which liturgical objects and other symbols are to be carried in the procession. It is at this point of the Mass that you might wish to bring symbolic gifts (such as workbooks) to be placed on the Sanctuary. Such things must never be part of the Offertory Procession. Make sure that all participants know how to process with reverence. All those in the procession should bow their heads to the altar before going on to the Sanctuary and before returning to their seat.	√
Music/hymn Please note that hymns used in Mass (Entrance, Offertory, Holy Communion, Recessional) are entirely optional and are not the same as other parts of the Mass which can be sung. There are a number of different Mass settings for the sung responses and it is useful to have a different setting for each season.	If choosing an Entrance Hymn it should be about gathering or relate to the theme of the days readings and the season.	optional
Penitential Act	There are three options to choose from: A) The Confiteor B) A short prayer to which the people respond taken from penitential psalms C) A series of prayers to which the people respond. The form is that of a Litany.	√
Lord Have Mercy (sung/said)	If A or B is selected this is followed by the Lord have Mercy. If C is selected the Lord Have Mercy is already incorporated into that prayer.	
Gloria (Not used during Advent or Lent)	The Gloria should ideally be sung as it is a song of praise. It is not normally used at a weekday Mass	x
LITURGY OF THE WORD		
First Reading	It is permissible to use readings from the children's lectionary. Readings should not be split up with different readers for different parts as the reading becomes disjointed and loses its flow. You may edit i.e. shorten a reading but you must not adapt, modify or paraphrase it in any way. In editing the text ensure that you do not lose the meaning of the text. You need to show any editing to the Parish Priest. If the readings are not being read from the Lectionary they must be presented in an appropriate dignified form. Presentation folders are useful for this. Before stepping on to the Sanctuary the readers should bow to the altar. If an archbishop/bishop is present then the bow should be towards him. Readers need to allow a "brief, prayerful silence" to allow the assembly	√

	time to absorb what they have heard. This can be achieved by the reader delaying moving away from the ambo/lectern (Liturgy Office)	
Psalm (sung/said)	Ideally this should be sung. Sometimes the refrain is sung whilst the verses are read.	√
Second Reading	Not usual at a weekday Mass	x
Gospel Acclamation (said/sung) <i>No Alleluia during Lent</i>	Alleluia can be said or sung. The verse can also be said or sung.	√
Gospel	Only read by the priest or deacon.	√
Creed In this prayer we profess our faith. The Creed is not said during Lent	Not usual at a weekday Mass	x
Prayers of the Faithful <i>We offer our prayer intentions always in the following order:</i> <i>For the Global Church</i> <i>For the world</i> <i>For those in need</i> <i>For the local community</i> <i>It is a tradition in England for a final prayer asking Our Lady to intercede for us which is then followed by the Hail Mary</i>	The Structure of the Prayer of the Faithful: - Invitation to Prayer (by the Priest) - Silence - Intentions - Intention (Let us pray for...) - Silence for prayer - Response (e.g. 'Lord in your mercy' or 'Lord Hear Us') - Prayer to Our Lady - Concluding Prayer (by the Priest) (Liturgy Office) It is permissible for children to write the intentions to be used in Mass. The prayers never begin by directly addressing God/Jesus (no 'Dear Lord/God') as we address God at the end of each prayer. Remember to make sure the prayers are presented in a dignified form (not on scraps of paper). The readers need to leave a moment of silence between the intention and the response to allow the assembly to absorb what/who they are praying for.	√
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST		
Offertory Procession <i>Only the bread and wine and gifts for the poor may be included in the procession</i>	Children may carry the offertory Gifts. They should bow to the altar before returning to their places.	√
Hymn/music	The hymn should be about the offering of bread and wine	optional
Holy, holy (said/sung)	The Sanctus should be sung If the Mass is taking place in Church it is appropriate for KS2 to kneel down. If KS1 can see the altar when kneeling then you may decide that they also should kneel.	√
Memorial Acclamation (said/sung)	Choose one of the three options available	√
Great Amen said or sung		√
COMMUNION RITE		
Our Father (said)		√
Sign of Peace	Whilst it is important that we have the time to make peace with one another before receiving Holy Communion it is important that children know only to make the Sign of Peace with the people immediately around them so that the peaceful and calm tone is maintained.	√
Lamb of God (said/sung)		√
Communion Procession	The Communion Procession should be dignified and reverend. It is appropriate to have adults guide the assembly out in turn. On returning to their place in Church the children should continue to kneel until the tabernacle doors have been closed. The Communion Hymn should be about the Holy Eucharist. It is also appropriate to play music at this point of the Mass. The hymn at	√

	communion should be part of the procession to Holy Communion and not simply after Holy Communion. Holy Communion can be followed by a post-communion prayer/reflection. There should be a few moments of silence after Holy Communion to allow people to pray. It is useful if the priest/deacon can lead the assembly into this quiet period of prayer.	
Eucharistic Ministers	Only those who have been specifically asked DDDDD may distribute Holy Communion.	
Hymn/music	This should be about the Blessed Sacrament.	optional
CONCLUDING RITE		
Procession	The children should not begin to leave the Church until those on the altar have left. The children should genuflect to the tabernacle before they leave. This can be done together in their pew or alternatively as they leave one by one.	√
Recessional Hymn/music	This should be about spreading the Good News	optional

Mass Planner for Days of the Week

Mass to be celebrated on _____ during the Season of Ordinary Time/Advent/Christmas/ Lent/Easter. Solemnity/Feast/Memorial of _____ or Feria.

Attended by Whole School/Upper KS2/Lower KS2/KS2/KS1/Foundation

Check List	Details	Ministers
INTRODUCTORY RITE		
Entrance Procession:		
Who (Father, Deacon, altar servers, readers)		
What (e.g. Book of Gospels, Processional Cross, workbooks etc)		
Music/hymn		
Lord have Mercy said or sung		
LITURGY OF THE WORD		
First Reading (From OT except during Easter Season when Acts is used)		
Psalm		
Gospel Acclamation said or sung (No Alleluia during Lent)		
Gospel		
Prayers of the Faithful (For the Global Church, for the world, for those in need, for the local community)		
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST		
Offertory Procession (only the bread and wine, gifts for the poor)		
Hymn/music		
Holy, holy said or sung		
Memorial Acclamation said or sung		
Great Amen said or sung		
COMMUNION RITE		
Our Father		
Lamb of God said or sung		
Holy Communion		
Eucharistic Ministers		
Hymn/music		
CONCLUDING RITE		
Procession		
Recessional Hymn/music		

Mass Planner for Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation

Mass to be celebrated on _____ during the Season of Ordinary Time/Advent/ Christmas/ Lent/Easter. Solemnity/Feast/Memorial of _____ or Feria.

Attended by Whole School/Upper KS2/Lower KS2/KS2/KS1/Foundation

Check List	Details	Ministers
INTRODUCTORY RITE		
Entrance Procession:		
Who (Father, Deacon, altar servers, readers)		
What (e.g. Book of Gospels, Processional Cross, workbooks etc)		
Music/hymn		
Lord have Mercy said or sung		
Gloria said or sung (not during Lent)		
LITURGY OF THE WORD		
First Reading (From OT except during Easter Season when Acts is used)		
Psalm		
Second Reading		
Gospel Acclamation said or sung (No Alleluia during Lent)		
Gospel		
Creed		
Prayers of the Faithful (For the Global Church, for the world, for those in need, for the local community)		
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST		
Offertory Procession (only the bread and wine, gifts for the poor)		
Hymn/music		
Holy, holy said or sung		
Memorial Acclamation said or sung		
Great Amen said or sung		
COMMUNION RITE		
Our Father		
Lamb of God said or sung		
Holy Communion		
Eucharistic Ministers		
Hymn/music		
CONCLUDING RITE		
Procession		
Recessional Hymn/music		