

## Part II

When last we met, I had managed to walk you through the Mass of the Catechumens, learners, and I mentioned that the second half was the Mass of the Faithful. In the past, when it was potentially a death sentence to be a practicing Christian, the Catechumens were not permitted to know the rites of worship of the Church. So far as I know, none of you are mere catechumens: none of you are waiting to receive Baptism, and none of you are going to betray present company as being Christians to curry favor with the local authorities. Some of you are, however, preparing for Confirmation, the last of the sacraments of initiation. The class on the rite of confirmation itself will wait for another time.

My tasks this evening are three, but I may accomplish only two of them: to give you a supersonic fly-over of the rest of the Mass, so that Canon Ueda can go into more depth; to give you some practical tips to help you participate at Mass, in the “how not to look like a foreigner” department; and to begin to present some of the Latin texts. Accordingly, I will take slightly less than an hour, and will leave the balance of the time to Canon Ueda’s presentation and to questions from you.

Before I start with my description of the Mass, I need to make one observation about the idea of “understanding” the Mass. I can give you a one sentence description of the Mass, just as my mother-in-law memorized (and some of your children may have memorized) a one sentence answer to the question, “Why did God make me?” -- but I can not, nor can Canon Ueda, nor can any of the saints exhaust our understanding of the Mass, teach us everything there is to know about the Mass. Accordingly, even an on-going class can continue to uncover new insights without finishing what there is to learn.

There are three basic parts of the Mass of the Faithful. The first is called the Offertory, the second is called the Consecration, and the third is called the Communion; all three are essential, so without one of them, Mass does not happen, but the Communion referred to is that of the priest. None of the laity need to receive Communion, in the sense of having an obligation to receive, except once a year during the Easter season. In any event, after the Communion, there is the Post Communion prayer, a small number of prayers said silently by the priest, the Dismissal, the Final Blessing, the Last Gospel and, if you attend Low Mass, the Leonine prayers, named for Pope Leo XIII. British Airways’ Concorde made the transatlantic flight in 3 hours, and I have summarized the Mass of the Faithful in four sentences. Since Canon Ueda will deal in much more detail with the theological heart of the Mass, I will say only a little more about the territory I have flown over at such a speed, because the little I will add falls under “help for the newcomer”.

I will start with something obvious. During the Credo, everyone genuflects for at least a portion of the text which says: *Et Incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est*. The reason for this genuflection is that we bend the knee before the Infant in the manger, and every time we recall that blessed birth, we genuflect. Much nearer the end of Mass, when the celebrant reads the beginning of St. John’s Gospel, he comes to the same text, and we genuflect there. If you remain standing at this point, you will be the only one standing.

At one point during the High and Solemn High Masses, the thurifer, carrying his thurible and accompanied by his boat boy, comes to the altar rail, to incense you just after the Offertory has begun. You are being sanctified. It is customary to stand up as he approaches, bow to him when he bows to you, receive the incense, and then bow again. (This does not happen during a Low Mass, because no incense is used at Low Mass.) Usually people sit down again after the second bow, but sometimes there is not time. At the *Sanctus*, everyone kneels (except choir members who think they can not kneel and sing, and organists, who actually can not kneel and play at the same time. The choir kneels as soon as the *Sanctus* is complete.) Everyone remains kneeling from this point until the celebrant concludes the Canon with a doxology: *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. If you are one of the people who can *not* kneel – whether the cause is keeping track of a wandering toddler or nursing a child or arthritic knees—you should do your best to make an act of the will to have a kneeling frame of mind, a mental posture of adoration.

If the celebrant bids you, saying, *Dominus Vobiscum*, the correct response every time is *Et Cum Spiritu Tuo*. The one time you have an extended interchange with the celebrant occurs after the Offertory, properly speaking, has concluded. One useful point to know is that your response uses the *same melody* as his, but different words. The melody changes for some special occasions, such as funerals, and for some more solemnly joyful occasions, too).

When the celebrant finishes the priest-only part of the preface, the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus qui venit* is sung or said, depending on circumstances. At Low Mass, a bell rings three times to accompany the beginning of the hymn, echoing the 3 invocations “Holy, Holy, Holy”. At High and Solemn High Masses, the sung dialogue between celebrant and faithful is not accompanied or interrupted, unless a pitch is given by the organ or the choirmaster. If a chant setting of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* is not sung, but the choir sings a polyphonic setting, the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* frame the Consecration: one comes beforehand and the other comes afterwards. At the beginning of the *Sanctus*, the faithful kneel and remain kneeling until the end of the Canon, just before the *Pater noster*. At High Mass, you stand at the celebrant’s words, *per omnia saecula saeculorum*, but at Low Mass, you remain kneeling.

Skipping ahead a little, there is a **third Confiteor**, but this one isn’t said by the priest at all, only by the servers and the faithful. The visual cue at Low and High Mass (which the servers can see, and you often can not) is that the celebrant picks up the chalice, to drink from it. Knowing this is coming, I say the first phrase separately, earlier, and wait for the servers to catch up to me, rather than trying to play catch up with them. The **visual** cue at a Solemn High Mass is that one of the clerics crosses to the Epistle side and bows profoundly from the waist; he begins singing the *Confiteor* immediately. Please don’t sing with him loudly enough to be heard by anyone except your guardian angel. The faithful reply with an “Amen” at the end of this prayer.

Communion is received kneeling and on the tongue. Those who have observed the Eucharistic fast, and who are not conscious of being the state of mortal sin, and who are properly prepared by their participation at Mass, are able to receive Holy Communion. The Eucharistic fast has been reduced over the years: at one point it started at midnight; then it became three-hours long; then it was reduced to one hour from the time of receiving. The legal requirement is 1 hour, in the Code of Canon Law. Longer

fasts may be kept, of course, but are not required. Holy Communion is usually distributed at the Altar Rail. (I say *usually* because if a person can not approach the altar rail physically, it sometimes happens that the priest and his server go to the person (identified beforehand) and give him Holy Communion at his pew.) Those who are afflicted with celiac disease can inform the celebrant of this and, with enough notice, can receive low-gluten hosts. Under ordinary conditions, none but the priest receive from the chalice, and I will let Canon Ueda address the history on this point.

You are *not* required to receive Holy Communion at every Mass, and Pope Benedict XVI even observed that even those in the state of grace could profitably abstain from receiving Holy Communion for two reasons: to avoid the danger of allowing the reception of Holy Communion becoming just a routine; to make reparation for the many sacrilegious Communion received. Ushers will not come by the pews to usher you to the altar rail, so you will choose the time of your own receiving of Our Lord. ". In the revised rite, the communicant is presented with the Sacred Host and replies "Amen", for in doing so he acknowledges that what he receives really is the Body and Blood of Christ Himself. If you choose to receive, know that the priest who distributes Holy Communion will be saying a prayer for each communicant, and that he will end it with "Amen". Since the communicant is not asked to affirm anything in the venerable form of the rite, he does not, logically, respond "Amen" to the proposition which was not put to him.

After each person who is going to receive has done so, he returns to his place, and offers private thanksgiving to God. My Missal makes the observation that in addition to private prayers, a profitable way to thank God is to re-read some portion of the Mass, and spend a few moments thinking about it. Other people have a standard set of prayers they pray. The Red Missals have suggestions, too. Since it's personal and private, there are really only three rules which apply: what you pray as thanksgiving will differ from everyone else's thanksgiving; this is only right, because we are each at a unique place in our growth in the life of grace; do not prevent others from offering their own private thanksgivings. Kneeling is the expected posture. Usually people sit after the Tabernacle is closed again and the ablutions completed.

The dismissal and blessing are followed by the Last Gospel, which is usually from the Gospel of St. John and – since it is the Gospel, you stand. Since this text has the "et homo factus est", however, which I mentioned earlier, you will genuflect at this point, following the celebrant's example. If there is an unusual Last Gospel, or none at all, clearly, you will not genuflect.

At the end of Low Mass, there is a set of prayers called the Leonine Prayers, first ordered by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). These do not happen after Low Mass with organ or any more elaborate form. Some of these are prayed aloud by the priest, some by both priest and people. It is, I suppose, possible to pray these in Latin, but I do not think I have ever seen that done. Much more commonly, they are prayed in the local vernacular, in our case, English.

These prayers being completed, a procession out of the Church takes place. At Low Mass we sing the proper Marian Antiphon first, and stand until the celebrant has re-entered the sacristy. At High

and Solemn High Masses, the Marian Antiphon is sung, but whether it takes place during or before the procession depends on too many factors to discuss here.

In the interests of time, I have typed out examples of propers from some feasts, so you can read these on your own time. On another occasion, I will spend time helping you learn (and, hopefully, appreciate) the Latin text of the Mass which, at this point, sometimes serves as an obstacle to more complete participation in this great mystery of our faith. For now, I will turn you over to Canon Ueda, so you can learn in more detail about the Mass of the Faithful.