

## The Mass – An Introduction to the Lifeline of Catholics

The celebration of the Eucharist – otherwise known as the Mass is one of the most popular yet mysterious forms of worship that exists in the world today. For centuries, many have studied and attempted to explain the nuances that make up the format of the Mass. Others have shown that the history, the rituals and the symbols that weave the rich fabric of our liturgical faith, in fact, come from our ancestral forms of worship and have transcended through the ages into something beautiful yet mystical.

Our goal in this new series of articles on the history and the elements of the Mass is to demystify these rituals, symbols, and gestures and transform them into a ‘lifeline’ which gives vibrancy and life to our faith. The Mass, according to Michael Aquilina is “the heart which gives life to all other aspects of the Christian life” (The Mass, page 21). In this series, we will use Aquilina’s book, entitled “The Mass” along with references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Documents of Vatican II and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal to flesh out some of the rituals that make up our Mass. We will also use references to historical elements of our faith and the Church Fathers to round out the context and the spirituality of our Catholic faith.

However, for this first installment of the series, let us take a look at a few ‘tips’ to help us make the most out of our time at Mass:

Make a concerted effort to arrive at Mass at least 5-10 minutes before to collect your thoughts and prepare for the celebration.

Try to look at the readings for the following Sunday during the week so that your mind and your prayer may be directed towards the themes of the Sunday’s readings. The readings can be found online for free at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) and clicking on the corresponding date on the calendar on the right-hand side of the page.

Try to bring at least one other person to Mass with you who hasn’t been there in a while. The main reason why people do not attend weekly Mass is they are afraid they will be judged by everyone in the Church if they darken the doorstep. That level of fear can be dispelled by a simple invitation!

Let one aspect of the Mass (whether it is listening to the Word, focusing during the Consecration, or prayer after Communion) be a primary aspect of your focus as you go to Mass each week. The more you focus on one of these things, the easier the rest of them will be to recognize when you inadvertently forget to do them!

Try not to be one of the first people out of the Church after Mass! Many feel that when they have received Our Lord in Holy Communion they are “permitted” at that point to run out before the final blessing – this is certainly not the case! Make an honest effort to stay until the celebrant leaves each week so that you can participate in a complete celebration of the Eucharist.

Finally – Enter the celebration with an open spirit to the will of the Lord in your life. Bring all of your concerns to Him and leave them there as you leave renewed and refreshed to do his will on earth!