

Tea and Talk

Monday 7 October: The Gathering



Introduction

The **Eucharist** (also called the **Mass**, or **Holy Communion**) is the principal Christian act of worship, which we celebrate in obedience to the command of Jesus on the night of his betrayal. In the offering of the Eucharist we re-present the sacrifice of Calvary, and Jesus gives us his body and blood in bread and wine.

The Mass has four main sections: (1) The Gathering; (2) The Liturgy of the Word; (3) The Liturgy of the Sacrament; (4) The Dismissal. Today we look at **the Gathering**.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11.23-26)

1. What do we do before Mass?

We come together and greet one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord; we catch up on news

We welcome people who are new, *also* as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Do we get this right?!

We prepare ourselves for worship. When does this begin? Do we prepare ourselves before Mass before we leave home?

We remember we are in God's house, and he is present among us in a special way. We say our private prayers, perhaps lighting a candle.

Silence!

'Speak to God before Mass. Let God speak to you during Mass. Speak to one another after Mass.' Not a bad rule!



All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. (1 Corinthians 16.20)

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. (Hebrews 13.2)

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1 Corinthians 11.27-28)

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! (Psalm 95.7)

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46.10)

2. Greeting

Our formal worship begins. The arrival of the entrance procession signifies that the assembly is complete.

The Eucharist is offered in the name of God the Holy Trinity:

✠ **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The informal greetings before Mass conclude with a formal greeting between the celebrant and the gathered community:

The Lord be with you: and also with you.

The celebrant (priest) introduces the theme of the Mass.



"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18.20)

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (2 Timothy 1.2, and similar greetings in all of Paul's letters)

3. Confessing our sins

To prepare ourselves as individuals and as a Christian community, we confess our sins. But confession shouldn't just happen at Mass; what are the other ways we confess our sins?



We confess our own sins, but also the sins of our community, and the sins of the world.

Almighty God... we have sinned against you and against our neighbour... We are truly sorry, and repent of all our sins...

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1.8-9)

Jesus said to the disciples, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20.23)

4. Praising God

In response to God's mercy and forgiveness, we praise him using one of the church's oldest hymns, the *Gloria in excelsis*.



Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. (Psalm 98.1)

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name for ever and ever. (Psalm 145.1)

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God. (Psalm 147.1)

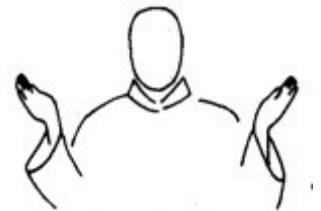
We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

5. Collecting our prayers and praises

The Gathering concludes with the Collect, the special prayer of the day, which collects the prayer, praise and penitence we have offered during this first part of the Mass.

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5.17)

It is said or sung by the celebrant on behalf of the gathered community. The celebrant extends his or her hands as a symbol of this being the prayer of all present; this is one of the oldest gestures in Christian worship.



Let us pray.

Next week...

We discuss **the Liturgy of the Word**, which includes readings from the Bible (usually Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospel, and sometimes a psalm too), the sermon (or homily), the Creed, and the Prayers of Intercession.