

WALK-THROUGH OF THE ANCIENT FORM OF THE ROMAN RITE

Fr. David Carter:

Welcome to our walk-through of the celebration of the Mass in the more ancient form of the Roman rite.

We will not actually be celebrating the holy sacrifice, as this is meant as an instruction. Therefore we will not distribute Holy Communion.

There is so much richness in this form of the Holy Sacrifice that what we discuss today will only highlight some important aspects as an introduction. There is so much more that can only be known through the repeated and devout celebration of this most beautiful expression of our worship.

This Mass has many names, the Latin Mass, the Tridentine Mass, the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, or, as I like to refer to it, the more ancient form of the Roman rite.

First a note about what this Mass is all about.

The Mass is a sacrifice.

The four ends or reasons of sacrifice are adoration, atonement, Thanksgiving, and petition.

Under the old law, different sacrifices were prescribed for each of these ends.

In the new covenant, Christ replaces the Old Testament sacrifices with his one perfect sacrifice on the cross.

This same one perfect sacrifice is re-presented to us every time the Mass is celebrated. Christ is both the priest and the victim of this sacrifice.

Thus, the four ends of sacrifice are fulfilled in this way in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass:

Adoration: The sacrifice of God's only Son is the only truly worthy gift we can offer Him in honor and adoration.

Atonement: Through the sacrifice of the Mass, we apply the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

Thanksgiving: Through Christ we offer most efficiently our thanks and praise for all the many benefits we receive.

Petition: Through Christ's intercession we hope to obtain the assistance of God's grace for our intentions.

We must realize that the Mass is not merely a religious service or a scripture class: it is in reality an experience of heaven on earth. In the Mass our God is made present to us and we worship and adore him in spirit and in truth.

There are two main parts of the Mass: the Mass of the Catechumens, and the Mass of the Faithful.

The Mass of the catechumens comprises what we now call in the Ordinary Form the liturgy of the word. It is based on the practice of the ancient synagogue. The scriptures are read and the prayers are prayed.

The Mass of the faithful comprises what we now call in the Ordinary Form the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is based on the ancient Jewish practice of the Passover sacrifice. It has close connections with the temple worship.

This form of the Mass is mostly prayed in the Latin language. There are also elements of Greek in the Kyrie and Hebrew in words such as *amen*, *alleluia*, *hosanna*, and *sabaoth*.

Latin was a language that was spoken during Jesus's time. In fact, the inscription over his head upon the cross was written in the Latin language. Furthermore, we in the Latin rite of the church have received our spiritual patrimony of the apostolic witness through this particular language. This language has safeguarded for us the deposit of faith through many centuries and is a venerable reminder to us of our sacred tradition.

This Mass is also offered with priest and people facing in a common direction. Many people often times suggest that the priest has turned his back to the people. In fact that would only be the case if the people were the center of attention at Mass. The posture of the priest facing in the same direction as the people towards the altar signifies very clearly that God and his saving action is the center of our attention at Mass.

The priest and the servers have a dialogue through most of the Mass. The servers answer on behalf of the people. Everyone however, is invited to participate with the servers and pray the prayers in a low voice along with the servers in responding to the priest.

In a Missa Cantata the schola often times sings while other sacred actions take place.

For instance, at the beginning of Mass, the schola will sing the Introit and the Kyrie as the priest and servers pray the prayers at the foot of the altar and ascend to the altar with incense and prayers.

We will now begin our walk through.

Robin or another commentator:

The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar

"I will go in unto the altar of God." The priest and servers prepare themselves to approach the most holy altar of God by praying Psalm 42. This psalm reminds us of our need for God's grace to enter into his presence, a Grace that he provides to all who ask it of him.

The priest then acknowledges his own sinfulness by reciting the *confiteor*. The servers and the people do the same after the priest.

Incense is offered to remind us that this is a holy place, made holy by God's own spirit. Our prayers also are symbolized by the incense. As incense rises, so may our prayers rise before the face of God.

We will now demonstrate the opening rites. You can follow along with the priest's actions starting on page 10 of the red booklet

The choir parts maybe found in the folded handout

(After the singing has concluded)

The Gloria is now sung. You will notice how the priest and servers go to the chair and sit as the Gloria is sung by the schola. At certain points, such as the name of Jesus, the priest will doff his hat in honor.

(After the singing has concluded)

The Collect of the Mass is now prayed.

(After the singing has concluded)

The readings from Scripture now take place. The first reading is either the Epistle or the Lesson. It is read on the Epistle side of the altar. Following the Epistle or Lesson that is read, the Gradual follows, and then the Alleluia with its verse.

The priest will sing the Epistle and then read the Gradual and Alleluia quietly while the schola sings these last two.

The priest will then move to the center of the altar impose incense in the thurible and prepare for the singing of the Gospel, which will take place on the Gospel side of the altar.

(After the priest has chanted the Gospel)

After the homily the priest returns to the center of the altar where he will intone the creed and the schola will continue singing it.

(After the singing is concluded)

With the conclusion of the creed we moved to the Mass of the faithful.

This part of the Mass begins with the Offertory. As we prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries, we now offer our bread and wine to God for his blessing, but we should also add our own gifts. In the days of the early Church, members of the church would form a procession bringing the gifts of food wine gold and precious jewels to the altar. Today it is customary to offer the gift of money for the support of the Church and her priests. This is the time for the collection. But more importantly we should offer ourselves to God spiritually lifting up our hearts to him along with the host on the paten.

The priest will now ask us to pray, and then he will turn towards the altar and prepare the gifts of bread and wine, offer them, and then incense these gifts on the altar.

The schola in the meanwhile will sing the Offertory chant and then will offer a beautiful piece of music as praise and glory to God.

(When the incensing is concluded)

Now that the Offertory is complete, the priest will again turn towards the people and bid them to pray that this sacrifice may be acceptable to God.

He will then pray what is known as the Secret. In the new order of Mass it is called the prayer over the gifts. This prayer is followed by the Preface, which will be sung by the priest and the responses made by all. At the conclusion of the Preface is the Sanctus, sung by the schola.

(When the singing is concluded)

We enter now the Canon of the Mass.

This part of the Mass has not been significantly modified since St. Gregory the Great in the sixth century.

This prayer is said quietly, which may be startling to many who are used to hearing the words prayed out loud. This silence in general has the character of an entering into God's "rest," that mysterious Sabbath rest of the seventh day that anticipates the glory of the everlasting eighth day of heavenly bliss.

Both in the East and in the West it became common to recite certain of the most solemn Eucharistic prayers, particularly the greater part of the Canon, in a very low or inaudible voice. Such recitation was termed 'mystic' (*mystikos*) as befits a creature admitted to the immediate presence of its Creator. The 'mystic' prayer of the celebrant has been a prime factor in creating that thrilling atmosphere of rapt adoration which has been the distinctive feature of Catholic worship throughout the ages; (Harris)

It is at this point in the Mass that the silence is broken only by the sound of the bell. The bell alerts us that something important is happening.

(When the bell rings)

The bell rings when the priest stretches his hands over the bread and wine in the same way that the high priest of the old law would do over the sin offerings. By this act of consecration the priest asks God that he might accept the blood of this victim in the place of the blood of sinners. In the case of the sacrifice of the new law made present in the holy sacrifice of the Mass that blood is the very blood of Jesus Christ the son of God offered for our sins on the cross.

Then follows the consecration, when the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Savior. Look for the priest to bow low to the altar, look for his genuflection, listen for the bells and look at the raising of the host and the chalice.

(When the priest says Per omnia saecula saeculorum)

With the end of the Canon we have concluded the sacrificial part of the Mass. We now seek to apply the fruits of this perfect sacrifice to our souls. We begin with the great prayer taught to us by Jesus, the Our Father.

The priest introduces the prayer and begins the Our Father. Notice how at the end he will stop praying and the people must finish the prayer.

(When the singing stops)

The priest now breaks the bread. This is one of the most ancient of practices being what Jesus himself did at the Last Supper. It is this ritual that we hear about in the Acts of the Apostles when they came together for the breaking of the bread. The priest also mingles a little bit of bread with the wine. This mingling of the bread and wine in the chalice symbolizes the miraculous reunion of Jesus's body and blood at his resurrection.

(After the singing of the Agnus Dei stops)

The priest, having received Holy Communion, turns to the people, presents the Lamb of God to them and they respond in Latin three times declaring the same words that were said by the centurion to Jesus:

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

(When the people have finished responding)

Everyone disposed to receive communion would then approach the altar to receive. Communion in the more ancient form is done kneeling and upon the tongue.

The priest will pray a prayer and conclude it with an *amen*. The communicant says nothing, as the priest will have said the *amen* for him.

(When the communion demonstration is concluded)

This is now a time of Thanksgiving for the faithful as the priest cleanses the vessels.

The choir in the meanwhile will sing the communion antiphon and any other musical selection they have prepared.

(When the music stops)

The priest will now invite us to pray and then he will come back to the center of the altar to send us forth with his *Ite Missa Est*.

He will then give his final blessing. Normally the priest goes back to the Gospel side after the blessing in order to read the last Gospel which is always John Chapter 1. However, on Christmas Day this very Gospel will be read earlier in the Mass, and so it will be omitted on Christmas Day. And then the recessional begins.