



### How Do We Prepare for Mass? - Fr. Luke

Having introduced you to the path that liturgical renewal has taken in the last hundred years, I want to invite you on a journey. Since one of the major aims of the current liturgical renewal is to enable us to celebrate the sacred mysteries fully, actively, and consciously, let us educate ourselves on the Mass. With the bulletin article written by our Glenna Benton last week, we officially started catechesis on the Mass. We will do this catechesis through the bulletin article, in 3 minute "little teachings" after the homily, and in various workshops and forums. Similar to going to a ball game, intentional preparation enables us to have a richer experience.

Phrases like "my Sunday best" give an impression that there was a time when going to church on Sunday was considered special; an occasion above others, and such a solemn celebration required a carefully selected wardrobe. To look one's best took preparation; one's attire was not an afterthought. I remember my mother laying out our clothes before we went to bed on Saturday evening. That ritual was probably psychological and spiritual preparation for Sunday liturgy. At a very young age I learned that Sunday was unlike any other day. Now I know why: the Sunday Mass is the most important prayer for Catholics because it makes present the saving work of Christ and therefore it is the highest honor, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and worship that we can ever render to our Creator. I understand why my parents considered it inexcusable to go to Mass with dirty or torn clothes or even a dirty body. I feel that such preparation is a little like the rituals athletes and performing artists carry out to get in the right frame of mind. We who attend Mass should do no less.

If we truly believe that Mass is the source and summit of our faith as Catholics, it is imperative for us to come to church mentally, physically, and spiritually prepared. We get upset when we show up and the choir seems to stumble over hymns or the lectors seem ill prepared. We need to remember that the liturgy is the work of the whole assembly. We should be disappointed in ourselves if we are not well prepared or if Mass becomes just one more thing on our "must do" list. For all of us, Mass should start long before we come through church doors. Since Mass is communal prayer, the rules of social (and liturgical) etiquette require us to think of our fellow worshippers in the way we take

care of personal hygiene and choose our attire. We need to strive in our choices (as is humanly possible) to minimize causing others unease. If we tend to dress up for symphony orchestras or class reunions, shouldn't the mass rank above these functions in our wardrobe choices?

More important though is our spiritual preparation. I strongly believe that similar to other endeavors, with Sunday Mass you reap what you sow, for the most part. You are most likely to get out of Mass close to how much you invest in it mentally and spiritually. If you leave Mass feeling nothing happened, begin by looking at how prepared you were for it and how much of yourself you invested in it. I recommend that you begin your Sunday preparation a whole week earlier by taking with you the bulletin. Our bulletin has week day and Sunday readings. An individual or family can carefully read the Sunday readings even at the dinner table (try reading the gospel a few times), then discuss and pray with them. When you come to Mass this prepared, the readings make more sense to you; you may hear from the ambo something you missed when you read the readings yourself or you may feel an insight you previously had being deepened.

In addition, parishes like ours give members an opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation. There was a time when "going to confession" was an indispensable part of the preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist. Today this practice is recommended for those who find themselves in the state of serious sin and desire to start over with the help of God's grace. Being reconciled with God and with fellow humans is a wonderful way of preparing for Mass. As to the immediate preparation, try not to cram too much in the hours preceding Mass. Get to church in time in order to settle down, turn off all electronic gadgets, clear your head and mind, then spend some quiet time before the Lord. Having the proper disposition is another important part of our preparation for mass. If we come with an open mind and heart, ready to be nourished on God's Word and the Eucharist, ready to be instructed and transformed, expecting something important to happen to us, chances are we will get more out of the mass. The transformation usually happens without our awareness and it may be others who point it out to us. The next article will deal with how we should celebrate the Lord's Day.