

In the last article we began looking at the parts of the Traditional Latin Mass. Last time we specifically looked at the beginning of the Mass, the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, which are said while the Introit or Entrance Antiphon is sung. The Priest and Altar Servers quietly pray Psalm 42 as the Psalm assigned to the day for the Introit is sung.

As mentioned last week, the Traditional Latin Mass gives you the freedom to prayerfully enter into the Mass as is most helpful to you. You may prayerfully follow the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar in the red book, or meditate upon the words of the Introit found on the folded handout. You also may simply allow the beautiful of the Chant and Sacred Rites to lift your mind and heart to God for beauty is a path to God.

Once the Priest and Altar Servers finish the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, the Priest ascends the steps of the Altar praying quietly two prayers. The first of these two prayers begs God to take away his iniquities, so that the Priest may enter into the Holy of Holies with a pure mind. The Holy of Holies originally referred to the inner sanctuary of the Old Testament Temple. It was the place where God dwelt among His people. The Sanctuary of Catholic churches and especially the Tabernacle in Catholic churches is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Temple. In the Tabernacle Our Lord Jesus Christ dwells among His people—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

The second prayer the Priest prays quietly as he arrives at the Altar and kisses it. The Altar is often kissed in the Traditional Latin Mass. The Altar represents Christ, and therefore is shown many acts of reverence. The Altar also contains relics. The prayer the Priest prays as he kisses the Altar at the beginning of the Holy Mass asks that by the merits of the Saints, whose relics are in the Altar, his sins would be forgiven. If you follow along with these prayers you can ask the Saints to intercede for you.

Once the Priest has finished these two prayers he then incenses the Altar (as long as there are enough servers to help with the incense). Incense has been used in divine worship from antiquity. In Sacred Scripture we read that incense was frequently used in the Temple of the Old Testament. In the Book of Revelation, Saint John had a vision of Heaven where he saw incense offered by Saint Michael at the Altar of God in Heaven. Saint John tells us that the incense represents the prayers of the faithful going up to God. In the incense we can see a representation of our prayers ascending to Almighty God. Incense is also used to honor something that is holy. The Altar and Crucifix are incensed at Holy Mass because they represent Christ. The Priest is incensed for the he stands in *Persona Christi*, in the Person of Christ. The Altar Servers and congregation are incensed as a reminder that you are set apart—God’s holy people. As the incense is offered there are several ways you can be participating in the Holy Mass. You could follow the Introit; again, you can allow yourself to be moved by the beauty of the rites, or you can send your prayers up to God as the incense ascends by praying for the intentions for which you want to offer your participation in the Mass and Holy Communion. The Mass is the highest form of prayer. The Priest offers it for the intention for which that Mass is to be offered. (You may request that a Mass to be offered for a particular intention by contacting the parish office.) You should offer your participation in the Mass and your reception of Holy Communion for your intentions. During the Incensation of the Altar you might pray: “Lord, I offer my participation at this Holy Mass and my reception of Holy Communion today for...” You can offer your participation in the Mass and your reception of Holy Communion in atonement for your sins, in thanksgiving for blessings received, for your intentions, and in petition for those you know are in need of prayer.

After the incensation, the Priest prays the Introit, which has already been sung. While the Priest is praying the Introit the Kyrie begins to be sung. Towards the end of the Introit the Gloria Patri (Glory be) is prayed. As the Priest prays “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...” he bows toward the Altar Cross. There are many bows made during the Mass. Whenever the Holy Name of Jesus is mentioned, the Priest bows his head in reverence. That is a praiseworthy custom that you may follow, not only at Mass but any time you hear Jesus’ name. Scripture says that at Jesus Name every knee shall bow, every tongue proclaim that He is Lord. This head bow at the Holy Name is a way of bodily showing the honor that is due to the Holy Name in our hearts. A bow is made when the Holy Trinity is Named, again as a sign of reverence for God Who IS Three Persons in One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Once the Priest finishes praying the Introit, he prays the Kyrie alternately with the Altar Servers. The Priest goes to the middle of the Altar and intones the Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest). The beginning of this prayer repeats the words said by the Angels to the shepherds announcing the Nativity of Our Lord. We have just begged God for mercy in the Kyrie, we now praise God trusting that He has heard our plea for mercy. During the Gloria we can allow ourselves to be moved by the Chant, or prayerfully offer the words to God. The Kyrie and Gloria are parts of the Mass that can be sung by the congregation. During this time of social distancing, the Archdiocese discourages congregational singing, but it would be good to follow the Chant so that you can learn it and sing it once the social distancing restrictions have been lifted. In the future we will offer a Chant workshop to help you learn to sing the various parts of the Mass.

Once the singing of the Gloria has concluded, the Priest kisses the Altar and sings “Dominus vobiscum” “the Lord be with you”. Before the Priest prays “Dominus vobiscum”

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each time throughout the Mass he first kisses the Altar. He reverences the Altar, which represents Christ before he prays that the Lord be with you, as if he greets Christ and then turns to greet the congregation. It also reminds us of the role of the Priest—he is an intermediary between God and the people. The Priest prays to God on behalf of the people and calls down God’s blessings upon the people. The Priest first kisses the Altar then greets the people to show that what he offers to them he has first received. The Collect or opening prayer follows, but that is where we will pick up next week. May these reflections help us to enter more deeply into these Sacred Mysteries. May God bless you!