

At the end of the Offertory there is a Preface followed by the “Holy, Holy, Holy”—this is the hymn that the Angels continually sing in Heaven. These prayers lead into the Roman Canon—the part of the Holy Mass in which the bread and wine will be miraculously changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. In the New Rite of Mass there are several options for the Eucharistic Prayer. In the Traditional Latin Mass there is only one—and it dates back to antiquity.

The Roman Canon is always said quietly in the Traditional Latin Mass. The reason for this is that what is taking place is a great Mystery. The traditional practice in the Church was always to veil that which is sacred. The Tabernacle has a veil. The chalice has a veil. The Sacred Rites of the Mass were veiled in a Sacred Language—Latin—this is a way of emphasizing the holiness of what is taking place. The Roman Canon—the prayer which brings God down upon the Altar—is further veiled by silence. The silence can be uncomfortable if you are not accustomed to it, especially in modern days when we live in a society that is continually noisy. We should try to allow the silence to lead us into prayer and inspire within us a great awe for the tremendous Mystery being made Present before us. God speaks in the silence, if we listen.

During the silence of the Roman Canon you should do your best to enter into prayer. While the Priest offers the prayer of the Canon to God you might follow along in the book interiorly offering the prayers to God along with the Priest. You might also meditate upon what is taking place: the Sacrifice that the Son made of Himself to the Father is made Present and offered anew, albeit in an un-bloody way. When we are present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we are at the very foot of Calvary. During the Canon imagine yourself there, with Mary, at the Foot of the Cross. During the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the merits of the Passion of Our

Lord and Savior are offered to the Eternal Father for us. As the Sacrifice is being offered by the Priest we can ask that the merits of the Passion of Our Lord be applied in atonement for our sins; we can offer them in union with Christ in thanksgiving for the many blessings God has bestowed upon us; we can pray for our intentions at that time and ask that the merits Christ won upon the Cross be applied to our family, friends, loved ones, and all the people and situations we know are in need of prayer. The Mass is the highest form of prayer. We can enter into that prayer in many different ways and we can offer it for all the intentions on our hearts.

During the Roman Canon there are many signs of reverence made by the Priest. The Priest often makes the Sign of the Cross over the Gifts. There are mystical meanings given for the various Signs of the Cross made during the Canon. To describe all of them would be beyond the scope of this sermon series, but I will offer an example. At the end of the Roman Canon the Priest takes the Body of Our Lord and holds it over the Chalice of the Precious Blood and makes three Signs of the Cross. This represents the three hours Our Lord hung upon the Cross. The Priest then makes two Signs of the Cross with the Sacred Host over the Corporal but away from the Chalice: these two Signs of the Cross with the Host away from the Chalice represent the separation of the Body and Blood—in other words it represents Our Lord's Death. The Chalice and Host are then lifted up together, which mystically represents the offering of Our Lord's Passion and Death to the Father. A short while later in the Mass the Priest takes a small part of the Host and makes three Signs of the Cross with It over the Chalice of Precious Blood while singing "Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum": "The Peace of the Lord be with you." These three Signs of the Cross represent the three days that the Lord was in the tomb. The Priest prays that peace be with you, which is the very same thing that Our Lord said to the Apostles when He appeared to them in the Upper Room after His Resurrection. The Priest at that time drops the

piece of the Sacred Host into the Precious Blood, thereby symbolizing the Body and Blood being reunited—a mystical sign of Our Lord’s Resurrection.

In addition to these actions which have mystical meanings, there are also several genuflections made by the Priest during the Roman Canon. The Priest genuflects before and after each time he touches the Sacred Host or Chalice of Precious Blood. These multiple signs of reverence remind him, as well as all of us, of the holiness of what, or rather Whom, he is handling: It is the Lord.

The Preparation for Holy Communion in the Traditional Latin Mass is similar to the Communion Rite in the New Mass. The Lord’s Prayer and the Agnus Dei (or Lamb of God) are both sung. As we prepare to receive Holy Communion we pray “Lord I am not worthy…” In the Traditional Latin Mass this is prayed three times to help make us aware of our unworthiness and our absolute dependence upon God’s mercy.

Communion in the Traditional Rite, as I mentioned is always given on the tongue and the Communicant does not say “Amen.” In the New Rite of Mass the Priest declares: “The Body of Christ” to which the Communicant responds “Amen” which means “It is so” or “I believe.” In the Traditional Latin Mass the Priest says a prayer over you and gives you a small Benediction, or Blessing, with the Sacred Host. As he makes the Sign of the Cross over you with the Sacred Host the Priest prays for each Communicant: “May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul unto everlasting life. Amen.” The Priest has said the “Amen” as part of his prayer for you—this enables you to simply prepare to receive the Lord by opening your mouth.

After Holy Communion has been distributed the Priest purifies the Sacred Vessels and then recites the Communion Antiphon. You may find this Antiphon in the folded handout. The Priest then prays the Post-Communion Prayer. There may be more than one Post-Communion

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Prayer. When a Feast Day is celebrated, the prayer for the Feast and the prayer for Sunday are both prayed.

After the Priest Blesses the people he again goes to the Gospel side of the Altar where he quietly reads the Last Gospel. This is an act of thanksgiving. The Last Gospel comes from the first chapter of Saint John's Gospel and focuses us on the Eternal Son of God taking flesh and dwelling among us, which is the same reality that just took place upon the Altar—The Word of God was made flesh, and dwells among us in the Holy Eucharist. As the Priest reads those words he genuflects at the great Mystery of the Incarnation and all genuflect with him. It is good to prayerfully follow the Last Gospel in your book and meditate upon the Incarnation as the Priest reads the Last Gospel quietly. This is also a time to give thanks for Our Lord for coming down upon our Altar, allowing you to participate in the Holy Sacrifice, and uniting Himself to you in Holy Communion.

This concludes the series of articles on the parts of the Traditional Latin Mass—I pray that these explanations and reflections help you to enter more deeply into the Sacred Mysteries. May God bless you!