

Mass Etiquette: Dos and Don'ts while at Mass

Do Fast: Canon 919 of the “Code of Canon Law” states, “One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion.

Do come early, recollect yourself: Please try to be on time for Mass! Sometimes things can't be helped, without doubt – cars break down, babies need changing, alarm clocks fail to go off – but chronic lateness for the Mass is rude and disruptive. When you enter the Church, cross yourself with Holy Water and thank God for the grace given to you at Baptism. When you reach your pew, genuflect toward the Tabernacle in the Sanctuary before sitting down. Keep sacred silence in the church. Avoid unnecessary conversation/noise and keep necessary conversation to a very low whisper.

Do Genuflect: When we enter and leave Church, genuflect toward the Tabernacle (usually indicated by some light beside it). Christ is present for our sake. By allowing our right knee to hit the floor, we acknowledge He is our Lord and God. If someone is physically unable to genuflect, then a bow is sufficient. During Mass, if you pass in front of the altar or tabernacle, bow reverently. When you kneel, or get up from kneeling, please gently lift or put down the kneeler in front of you, lest more additional noise occur, which may be distracting to others.



Don't eat: Do not chew gum or bring food or drinks into the church. The only exceptions are discreetly breastfeeding or giving a bottle to an infant (or, of course, rare medical). Water is acceptable if necessary.

Don't chew gum at church. It breaks your fast, it's distracting, and it is considered impolite in a formal setting.

Do dress properly: Dressing for Mass is simply a matter of showing proper respect, not only for God, but for others around you. Never let circumstances out of your control make you feel embarrassed or keep you away from the Sacraments, but one should always wear clothes that are modest, and, if possible, all things being equal, clean and the nicest clothes one has. Men take your hats off. It is impolite for a man to wear a hat into a church. Just as we take off hats for the Pledge of Allegiance, we do so in church too, as a sign of respect.

Do actively participate: Some find it hard to follow all the routines over and over again; to stand, sit speak when needed etc. However, active participation means exactly this. In order to be really part of a praying community, we must join the Body of Christ in its movements. We are supposed to try as much as possible to join in all the appropriate gestures while at Mass for our participation to be perfect.

Do join the songs and prayers of the community. If you think your singing will distract others, or you do not quite know the hymn or prayers, a soft tone is fine.

Do receive Communion properly: It is customary to show some reverence before, during and after communion. Before receiving, one must recollect, pray, and prepare themselves. Receiving, it is advised to bow or kneel (depending on what's customary in your area). After receiving, kneel and pray to Jesus, don't be in a hurry, he might also have a word or two for you; pray and keep still for a while.



Consume the Host immediately. If you do not, a Eucharistic Minister may ask you to. This is to protect the Sacrament. Intinction ("dipping" the Host in the Precious Blood) is generally not allowed. When the Eucharistic Minister presents the Host and says "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ", the proper response is "Amen!". This indicates that you know and believe that what you are about to receive is Jesus Himself. Please make sure you have a firm hold on the Chalice (without grabbing it) when receiving it from the Eucharistic Minister.

Do be charitable: Remember to respect people close to you; your neighbor might not like to have their hand held or even be talked to while at mass; be sure to respect their needs.

Do bring your children: Children sometimes can't help making a bit of noise at Mass but if your child is out of control or disruptive enough to distract people, or makes it hard for others to hear or contemplate, take him to the Narthex, the "Cry Room," or outside. Remember, too, that an acceptable level of noise to you as a parent might be one thing because you are used to



hearing your children; others might find that same noise very distracting. Children should not be allowed to rattle keys, drop toys, kith the pews or run in the aisles. These behaviors are distracting to the other people and especially to a priest who is trying to give a homily. Parents simply need to be parents, using good judgment and discipline with the little ones.

Note that children under the age of reason (7 years old) aren't required to attend Mass. While it es extremely laudable to bring children of ALL ages to Mass, it is also OK to leave them at home if it makes things easier on you or if they are particularly cranky or boisterous one day.

Children who are old enough to pay some attention might be better off sitting in front so that they can watch more closely what the priest and altar servers do. This will not only help them learn about the Mass, but will keep their attention occupied so they'll be less fidgety. Children who are old enough to read could have children's missals so they can follow along.

Don't be in a hurry: Do not leave the Church before the Presider; the Mass ends officially when the priest leaves the Church. Even then, it is usually advised you sit/kneel in silent prayer of thanksgiving or simply gaze at Jesus in the Tabernacle, smile at him and just be joyful. After which you should leave quietly in order not to distract others.