

OUR LADY OF LOURDES RCIA

The Liturgy Of The Word

And

The Liturgy Of The Eucharist

The Church celebrates in the liturgy above all the Pascal Mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation.

CCC 1067

The celebration of the liturgy observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public and regular worship “as a sign of His universal beneficence to all.

CCC 2176, citing St. Thomas Aquinas, S.Th. II-II

The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist together form one single act of worship.

CCC 1346

INTRODUCTION:

The Eucharistic Celebration – The Mass

1. The Eucharistic liturgy, more commonly referred to as the Sacrifice of the Mass, “Is the culmination both of God’s action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through Him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.”¹
So, then, from its celebration, grace flows for the sanctification of mankind as worship is offered to the Father through and by the sacrificial act of Jesus for mankind’s redemption.
2. Holy Mass is the solemn and ultimate act of adoration and worship one can give to God. It is the offering of Jesus Himself to the Father on behalf of His Church in re-presenting His Passion and death in an voluntary and obedient act of sacrifice for the salvation of mankind.
3. The Eucharistic Celebration (Mass) contains the entire treasure of the Church since it makes present the Pascal Mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, the very central event of Salvation. Its origin is founded in the Last Supper; “In order to leave them a pledge of His love, in order never to depart from His own and to make them sharers in His Passion, He instituted the Eucharist as a memorial of His death and resurrection, and commanded His apostles to celebrate it until His return; thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament.”²
4. The head of the Eucharistic celebration is “Christ Himself, the principle agent . . . He is the High Priest of the New Covenant; it is He Himself who presides invisibly over every celebration.” The visible priest celebrant acts in “the person of Christ the Head.”³
5. The Mass is both a memorial and a sacrifice. As a memorial, it is an external, institutional manifestation of memory; it is a recollection definitively inscribed in history. Jesus had willed it by transforming the Passover meal into the Eucharistic meal, a memorial that would forever reproduce what had occurred at the Last Supper. Just as the Passover recalled freedom from slavery in Egypt, the Eucharistic celebration is the New Exodus from slavery to sin.

¹ CCC 1325

² CCC 1337, citing Council of Trent: DS 1740

³ CCC 1348

6. As a sacrifice, Christ is the sacrificial lamb. He and He alone is the price paid for our salvation. In the Eucharistic celebration, Christ offers Himself through His Body and Blood, rendered present and offered to the Father for the salvation of humanity. The sacrifice of the Cross was a bloody immolation having taken place once only, while the Eucharistic sacrifice is a ritual order which excludes the shedding of blood but does re-present Christ offering himself again and again to God the Father on our behalf in worship and adoration.
7. The liturgy of the Mass unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our present day. It displays two great parts that form a fundamental unity:
 - The Liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions
 - The Liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving and communion.”⁴

LITURGY OF THE WORD

8. The Liturgy of the Word opens with assigned introductory rites. The Christian community, called together and united by the Holy Spirit, gathers to worship. This first movement includes the Penitential rite whereby the community is asked to examine their conscience for any imperfection, personal failings or omissions, and, with sincere heart, to ask for mercy and forgiveness. Forthwith, the praise of the “Gloria” is either recited or sung; a prayer of glory, homage and adoration directed collectively and to each individual Person of the Blessed Trinity. This act of adoration and acknowledgement is followed by an Opening Prayer recited by the presiding prelate.
9. God speaks directly to His children in the Liturgy of the Word over the course of the liturgical year. The readings are taken for Scripture, either from the Old Testament and/or from the writings of the Apostles, intermixed with recitation or chanting of an appointed Psalm of the Old Testament. The heart of this part of the celebration is the acclamation of the Gospel and the Homily that follows. These readings and sermon are meant to arouse one’s faith and as a preparation for the community for an even deeper participation in the mystery of the Eucharist.

⁴ CCC. 1346

10. The Liturgy of the Word is concluded with a profession of the faith with the recitation of the Creed and the General Intercessions. The Creed, a formula of beliefs which emanated from the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.,⁵ expresses explicitly the beliefs and the great mysteries of Catholic faith, based on Scripture and Tradition, from creation through redemption and up to the resurrection of the body and everlasting life.

The General Intercessions, often called Prayers of the Faithful, consists of prayerful intentions and petitions for the various needs of the universal Church and the local community, for the salvation of the world and for special categories of people.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

11. The other major part of the celebration of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, its theme centered in the Sacrificial Offering and Communion.

In a preparatory action, the altar upon which the Sacrifice is to take place, is set as for a “meal” signifying that something is about to begin. Gifts of bread and wine are brought forward, accepted by the presiding priest, and placed on the altar together with the chalice. The priest gives acknowledgement and thanksgiving to God for these fruits of the earth which will be offered in the sacrificial rite.

12. After the exhortation to the people by the celebrant to pray “that my sacrifice and yours will be accepted to God,” the “Canon of the Mass”⁶ is proclaimed with a Eucharistic prayer; a long prayer at the heart and main section of the part of the liturgy.

In this prayer, thanksgiving is given to God, the Father, through Christ in the Spirit for the gifts of creation, salvation, and sanctification. At its conclusion, the congregation exclaims with the angels and saints in the recitation of the triple “Holy, Holy, Holy,” recalling the vision of the prophet Isaiah, witnessing the exhortation of the seraphic angels in their “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, all the earth is filled with His glory.”⁷

⁵ The Niceno-Constantinopolitan or Nicene Creed stems from the first two ecumenical Councils (Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople 381)

⁶ Canon (Rule) of the Mass is the name used in the Roman Missal for the fundamental part of the Mass that comes after the Offertory and before the Communion.

⁷ Is. 6: 2-3

13. Invoking the Holy Spirit, the priest imposes his hands over the bread and cup, calling “upon God’s power and asking that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated.”⁸

The priest proclaims Jesus’ very words of Consecration at the Last Supper whereby the substance of ordinary bread and wine are transformed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.⁹ “The power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present, under the species (appearance) of bread and wine, Christ’s Body and Blood, His sacrifice offered on the cross for all.”¹⁰

14. With the acclamation of faith by the entire congregation, the priest continues in prayer, in union with all the saints, for all of God’s people and for the needs of all the members of the Church, both living and dead. The Eucharistic prayer is concluded with praise to God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This glorification is confirmed and concluded by the people’s “Amen.”

15. The Communion Rite begins with the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, followed with the offering of a sign of mutual love and peace for one another that comes forth from one’s union with Christ.

The “Lamb of God” is recited or sung; a plea to Christ who sanctified Himself for us, and who alone has the power to grant us mercy and peace. The congregation is invited to come forth to receive Holy Communion after the recitation of one’s unworthiness, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

The Communion Rite is concluded with a closing prayer asking for the bestowal of the spiritual effects of the Eucharist, followed with the blessing by the priest and dismissal of the assembly.

CONCLUSION

16. “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, two actions, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the banquet of communion with the Lord’s Body and blood.”¹¹

⁸ Gen. Instr. to Roman Missal

⁹ The change of the substance of bread and wine into that of the Body and Blood of Christ is called Transubstantiation

¹⁰ CCC 1353

¹¹ CCC. 1382

This catechetical quote further states that the celebration of the sacrifice in its totality is directed to an intimate union of the faithful with Christ through the reception of Communion. In so doing, to receive Communion is to receive Christ Himself, the same Christ who offered Himself to the Father on our behalf.

KEY PHRASES

- ❖ In liturgy, we praise and adore the Father as the source of all the blessings of creation, salvation and divine adoption.
- ❖ The Eucharistic Liturgy, in its entirety, both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, contains the entire treasure of the Church since it makes present the Pascal Mystery, the very center event of Salvation.
- ❖ The Eucharist is the summit and source of our Christian life.
- ❖ The substantial change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ¹² happens through the power of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the priest acting in the person of Christ.

¹² The change of the substance of bread and wine into that of the Body and Blood of Christ is called Transubstantiation