



YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST

DECEMBER THEME – STRUCTURE OF THE EUCHARIST

By Msgr Michael de Verteuil

“The Mass is made up of two parts: The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. These two parts are so closely connected that they form but one single act of worship...there are also certain rites to open and conclude the celebration.” From General Instruction of the Roman Missal (as all quotes in text)

Opening Rites

These rites include the opening song, greeting, penitential, Gloria, opening prayer. The worshippers have come from different places and are of different backgrounds – these rites are to help unite us and to prepare us “to listen properly to God’s Word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.”

In these rites we sing together, together ask for God’s mercy and the prayers of one another (“and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me....”), we sing out in praise to the Lord as we proclaim our faith.

(“*You alone are the holy One, You alone are the Lord.*”) and we pray the opening prayer “through which the character of the celebration is expressed.” These rites are the community’s way of preparing itself to celebrate the Eucharist.

How do I personally prepare myself before arriving or when I arrive at Church?

Liturgy of the Word

The Introductory rites have prepared us to participate fully in this part of the Mass made up mainly of readings from Scripture. Also included are the homily, profession of faith, prayers of the faithful.

“When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel.” We respond in the psalm, our alleluia, profession of faith and our petitions for the needs of the Church and the world,

“In the readings, the table of God’s Word is laid for the faithful and the riches of the Bible are opened to them.” Over a three-year period the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke

are read on Sundays in consecutive years (this year we are reading Matthew) with John being read in the seasons of Lent and Easter.

The first reading is from the Old Testament (except in Easter when it is from Acts) and its content is a foreshadowing of what is recounted in the Gospel. The second is from the New Testament.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

This part of the Mass follows the pattern of Jesus' four actions at the Last Supper:

- i) He *took* bread and wine,
- ii) *blessed and gave thanks* to God,
- iii) *broke* the bread
- iv) and *shared* His Body and Blood.

In the preparation of the gifts we *take* the bread and wine. (Jesus' first action) and acknowledge that all that we offer is God's gift to us: *Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation; through your goodness we have this bread/wine...* These gifts are expressive of our lives – *the work of human hands*. This rite is simply one of preparation for the Eucharistic prayer which is to follow. A collection can be taken up for the Church and the poor.

ii) *He blessed and gave thanks* (Jesus' second action)

“Now the centre and summit of the entire celebration begins: the Eucharistic prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The priest invites the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanks; he unites them with himself in the prayer he addresses to God the Father in the name of the entire community through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

The meaning of the prayer is that the entire congregation joins itself to Christ in acknowledging the great things God has done and in offering the sacrifice.”
In the Eucharistic prayer we give thanks, we call on the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine and us, we remember the institution of the Eucharist, Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer ourselves in union with Christ to the Father, we intercede for the Church and all its members living and dead and for the world.

We end by praising God through, with and in Jesus Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Do I pay attention to this prayer? Do I give my Amen wholeheartedly to this prayer?

The rite of Communion: in this part of the liturgy of the Eucharist we do the third and fourth actions of Jesus. iii) At the Lamb of God we *break* the holy bread and at communion iv) we *share* Jesus' body and blood.

Before we do these actions we pray together the Lord's Prayer and wish one another the peace of Christ. We are about to come into communion with him, the prince of peace, and with all who receive.

The sign of peace is an external sign of what receiving of communion demands and what we commit ourselves to – the kingdom of peace and unity. *Happy are we who are called to his supper* reminds us that we are called not only to the “supper” we are receiving at that moment but also to the wedding feast of heaven.

How seriously do I take the sign of peace? *Lord, I am not worthy* – do I recognise the wonderful privilege to which I am called?

The Concluding Rite

We have gathered, listened and responded, taken bread and wine, blessed and given thanks to the Father through with and in Jesus Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we have broken bread and shared the Body and Blood of Jesus.

Now we prepare to leave. But first there may be brief announcements about our community life and then the blessing and dismissal. We go to love and serve the Lord, to continue in our daily lives what we have been doing in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Possibly because this part of the Mass is so short, we have often tended to overlook its importance but important it is because here we are being commissioned for service as part of the Body of Christ.

**Am I conscious of being sent out on mission from Mass?
Is my daily life affected by my Sunday celebration?**