

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Mass consists of two main parts, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which together create a single act of worship. Through the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we are fed by Jesus who is the Bread of Life.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Preparation of the Gifts, including the Prayer over the Gifts. The two central rites are the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite, each including many smaller acts. On some occasions, a Hymn of Praise may be sung after Communion. The Liturgy of the Eucharist ends with the Prayer after Communion.

The high point of the entire Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer. It is through this Prayer that the priest offers himself and the assembly to God the Father, as part of the sacrifice of Jesus. It is also through this Prayer that the Holy Spirit through the ministerial priesthood consecrates the bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ. Although the majority of the Eucharistic Prayer is said by the priest, the assembly still plays a very important role. The assembly listens to the Eucharistic Prayer with reverence and conscious participation, and makes responses throughout the Prayer.

The Communion Rite is centered on the assembly receiving the Body of Christ, sanctified during the Eucharistic Prayer. By participating in the Mass, we are demonstrating that we are united to Jesus and to each other. By receiving Communion, we are creating a physical sign of this unity. We also receive spiritual nourishment from the Sacrament (Eucharist), which deepens our faith, increases our love, imparts to us the new life of the resurrection, and strengthens our unity with all the faithful.

By instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper, Jesus created the way for the Paschal Sacrifice to be continuously present. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we learn that we are also celebrating with the whole Church, both on earth and in Heaven. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is our participation in Jesus' own sacrifice, together with all of the faithful, in all places and in all times.