

The Mass Explained

Part 1

The Entrance and Collect

Each week during the Season of Advent I hope to break down the Mass in several parts explaining its meaning and why we do what we do at our Eucharistic Celebration - The Mass.

The priest and/deacon begins by kissing the altar as soon as he approaches it.

This is because it is a symbol of Jesus and the Eucharistic Sacrifice will be offered on it. Each altar also contains relics of the martyrs who gave their lives for Christ.

Because we belong to God we begin every Mass by signing ourselves with the cross in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

Because none of us is yet fully Christ, none of us is yet fully converted, and each of us is in need of further conversion, we ask for mercy for our sins before we listen to the Word of God in the readings.

Having been forgiven by God it is natural to give thanks. We want to thank God for his love for us and we do so using the **Gloria** which is a hymn as old as the fourth century. It begins with the words of the angels to the shepherds on the first Christmas night.

The opening prayer is called the **Collect**. It begins with the priest saying, "Let us pray..." followed by a pause for the people's silent prayer. All of these silent prayers of the people are then 'collected' (hence the name Collect) and offered to God in the prayer offered by the priest. The priest offers this prayer with outstretched arms symbolizing being freed by Jesus dying on the cross and rising for us. The people answer "*Amen*" to this opening prayer. "Amen" means

“so be it” or “Let it be.” It is the people’s acknowledgement and acceptance as their own the prayer which the priest has offered to God on our behalf.