

All should wear appropriate clothing to the Church. Clothing should be modest, free of improper symbols & messages, and should not be tight-fitting. Bathing suits, shorts, halter tops, and t-shirts are unsuitable Church attire (t-shirts may be acceptable, perhaps, in cases of exceptional poverty). "Give to the LORD the glory due his name! Bring gifts, and enter his presence; worship the LORD in holy attire." (1CHRON 16:29)

Women of all ages are encouraged to wear a head covering as recommended in the Bible (see 1COR 11:3-16).

Can the priest change the liturgy?

Unfortunately, many Catholics are subjected to novelties imprudently or even unlawfully introduced into Mass and other liturgies by their priests or bishops. This practice has been condemned by the popes.

According to Pope Pius XII in Mediator Dei: "The Sovereign Pontiff alone enjoys the right to recognize and establish any practice touching the worship of God...Bishops, for their part, have the right and duty carefully to watch over the exact observance of the prescriptions of the sacred canons respecting divine worship...no private person has any authority to regulate external practices of this kind, which are intimately bound up with Church discipline and with the order, unity and concord of the Mystical Body and frequently even with the integrity of the Catholic faith itself."

"Let everything be done with due order and dignity, and let no one, not even a priest, make use of the sacred edifices according to his whim to try out experiments." (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

The Church exercises control over liturgical matters to "protect the purity of divine worship against abuse from dangerous and imprudent innovations" (Pope Pius XII) as well as to avoid its being tainted with errors. God Himself made minute provisions for sacred rites in the Old Covenant for rendering Him proper worship. Pope Pius XII sates: "It is necessary that the spirit of the sacred liturgy and its directives should exercise such a salutary influence on them that nothing improper be introduced nor anything unworthy of the dignity of the house of God or detrimental to the sacred functions or opposed to solid piety." If your parish is celebrating Mass improperly, you should discuss it with the priest or notify the proper Church authorities. If the problem persists, it may be necessary to switch parishes. One must always put God first.

"Surely I, the LORD, do not change" (MAL 3:6) ✦ "God is not man that he should speak falsely, nor human, that he should change his mind." (NUM 23:19) ✦ "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (HEB 13:8) ✦ "All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change." (JMS 1:17)

Other Do's & Don'ts:

Before / During / After Mass: Bless yourself with holy water and make the sign of the cross upon entering the Church (recalling the gift of your baptism); Genuflect towards the Tabernacle and make a sign of the cross before entering the pew and after passing the Tabernacle; Some parishioners need to be seated at the end of an aisle for medical or other reasons. Respect their needs; Be on time to Mass and do not leave early; Turn off phones, pagers, alarms, etc. before entering the Church; Talk outside, not inside Church; Pay attention during Mass; Do not clap in Church for any reason. This includes good singing and good homilies; Do not eat or drink in Church; It is not necessary to hold hands in Church or perform other acts that take your proper focus off God; Focus on the priest (who is in the place of Christ) throughout the Mass, not on your neighbor; Practice Christian behavior in the parking lot.

Children: Noisy or distracting children should be taken outside the Church, taken to the crying room, or left with babysitting services; Do not provide distracting activities, toys, or food for children in Church; Do not allow children to run around in Church, talk or make noise, or climb on pews.

Note that all the above apply to the back as well as the main area of the Church and also to other Church activities (i.e. Confession). Remember that your conduct is an example or - God forbid - a hindrance, to others. "The LORD'S eyes are upon the reverent" (PS 33:18)

"Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all who dwell in the world show reverence." (PS 33:8)

"Tremble, you who are complacent! Shudder, you who are overconfident! Strip yourselves bare, with only a loincloth to cover you." (ISA 32:11)

"If the faithful were generally to understand that it behooves them ever to fight courageously under the banner of Christ their King, then, fired with apostolic zeal, they would strive to win over to their Lord those hearts that are bitter and estranged from Him, and would valiantly defend His rights." (Pope Pius XI)

"Let us restore our people from their ruined estate, and fight for our people and our sanctuary!" (IMACC 3:43)

There is much false information out there, sadly, some of it coming even from priests. Remember, you alone are responsible for your worship and piety. If others are behaving inappropriately, you might correct them in a gentle spirit, but, above all, worship well yourself - even if it means not going along with the multitudes. At the time of judgment, you will appear alone to answer for your conduct.

Did you know...? You can still attend the traditional, highly reverent Latin Mass - "The Mass of the Saints". For more information, contact your diocese.

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Our Responsibilities in God's House

"Therefore, we who are receiving the unshakable kingdom should have gratitude, with which we should offer worship pleasing to God in reverence and awe." (HEB 12:28)

The True Purpose of the Catholic Mass

The purpose of our attending the Mass is to worship and communicate with our Lord who is made truly present in the Holy Sacrifice.

"All the faithful should be aware that to participate in the eucharistic sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity, and that not in an inert and negligent fashion, giving way to distractions and day-dreaming, but with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest" (Pope Pius XII)

"But, assuredly, all of the duties which man has to fulfill, that without doubt, is the chiefest and holiest which commands him to worship God with devotion and piety." (Pope Leo XIII)

What dispositions are appropriate for participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

"When you hear Mass, do you come in the same frame of mind as the Blessed Virgin at Calvary? Because it is the same God, and the same Sacrifice." (St. John Vianney)

"Now the exhortation of the Apostle, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,' requires that all Christians should possess, as far as is humanly possible, the same dispositions as those which the divine Redeemer had when He offered Himself in sacrifice: that is to say, they should in a humble attitude of mind, pay adoration, honor, praise and thanksgiving to the supreme majesty of God." (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

"Let no one approach this holy Table without reverent devotion and fervent love, without true penitence, or without recalling the mystery of his redemption." (St. Thomas Aquinas)

"When we approach the altar we must, with God's help, prepare ourselves with all our power, and search into every corner of our souls, lest any sin be hidden therein." (St. Augustine)

"Go to your adoration as one would go to Heaven, to the divine banquet." (St. Peter Julian Eymard)

Approach more reverently than if you "were about to approach all the rulers in the whole world seated together in one place." (St. Thomas More)

"When you are before the altar where Christ reposes, you ought no longer to think that you are amongst men; but believe that there are troops of angels and archangels standing by you, and trembling with respect before the sovereign Master of Heaven and earth. Therefore, when you are in church, be there in silence, fear, and veneration." (St. John Chrysostom)

Is silence appropriate in Church?

"Let all mortal flesh be silent, standing there...in fear and trembling; for the King of kings, the Lord of lords, Christ our God is about to be sacrificed and to be given as food to the faithful." (St. James)

As Scripture indicates, silence is an appropriate behavior when enjoying His Presence: "But the LORD is in his holy temple; silence before him, all the earth!" (HAB 2:20); "Silence, all mankind, in the presence of the LORD! for he stirs forth from his holy dwelling" (ZECH 2:17); and "Silence in the presence of the Lord GOD!" (ZEPH 1:7)

As Our Lord Jesus "was silent and opened not his mouth" (ISA 53:7), we should remain silent in Church, remembering that that the purpose of our attending Mass is to worship and communicate with God. Mass is not intended for entertainment or socializing. Socializing should be conducted outside the Church building (i.e. in the hall). Talking may prevent both yourself and others from praying, listening to God, and worshipping God interiorly. For yourself and for the benefit of others, remain silent in Church.

"Silence is the vital space dedicated to the Lord, in an atmosphere of listening and assimilation of His Word. To remain faithful and zealous, it is necessary to know how to receive the Divine inspirations that come interiorly." (Pope John Paul II) "Quiet is the first step to sanctification." (St. Basil the Great)

In Scripture, women are especially called to refrain from speaking in Church. Since God is unchanging, we know that passages in the Bible, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, do not have an expiration date for validity. *New Testament* Scripture clearly states: "As in all the churches of the holy ones, women should keep silent in the

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churches, for they are not allowed to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. But if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in the church." (1COR 14:33-35) and "A woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. Further, Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed." (1TM 2:11-14) She who chooses not to heed clear teachings of Scripture must necessarily answer to God for her behavior. One should not expect the unchanging God to become more "modern" to suit likings of "modern women".

Is silent, interior prayer recommended or should we focus on the community aspect of the Mass?

Silent prayer is recommended by popes and countless saints: "The worship rendered by the Church to God must be, in its entirety, interior as well as exterior... But the chief element of divine worship must be interior" (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

We are especially called to silent prayer after Holy Communion since this is the moment of closest union with our Lord. Pope Pius XII in Mediator Dei states: "Wherefore, if there is no time when we must not offer God thanks, and if we must never cease from praising Him, who would dare to reprehend or find fault with the Church, because she advises her priests and faithful to converse with the divine Redeemer for at least a short while after Holy Communion, and inserts in her liturgical books, fitting prayers, enriched with indulgences, by which the sacred ministers may make suitable preparation before Mass and Holy Communion or may return thanks afterwards? So far is the sacred liturgy from restricting the interior devotion of individual Christians, that it actually fosters and promotes it so that they may be rendered like to Jesus Christ and through Him be brought to the heavenly Father; wherefore this same disciple of the liturgy demands that whoever has partaken of the Sacrifice of the altar should return fitting praise to God. For it is the good pleasure of the divine Redeemer to hearken to us when we pray, to converse with us intimately and to offer us a refuge in His loving Heart."

In fact, internal preparation may be necessary for receiving the fullness of grace from the sacraments: "If [the sacraments and the Sacrifice of the altar] are to produce their proper effect, it is absolutely necessary that our hearts be properly disposed to receive them." (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

Although there is a community aspect to Mass, in the Eucharist, Christ enters into communion with each of us individually. As Pope Pius XII states: "There are others who deny any impetratory power to our prayers, or who endeavor to insinuate into men's minds the idea that prayers offered to God in private should be considered of little worth, whereas public prayers which are made in the name of the Church are those which really matter, since they proceed from the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. This opinion is false; for the divine Redeemer is most closely united not only with His Church, which is His beloved Spouse, but also with each and every one of the faithful, and He ardently desires to speak with them heart to heart, especially after Holy Communion...how highly all should esteem mental prayer is proved not only by ecclesiastical documents but also by the custom and practice of the saints."

Those who do not practice private prayer in Church, especially after Holy Communion, may miss out on great fruits which derive from this closest of unions with God, and - *God forbid!* - may also make it impossible for others to miss out on fruits of this incomparable union.

"Above all I recommend to you always, recollection, that holy solitude, that inner sacred desert in which your soul ought always to be alone in the bosom of the heavenly Father, in the silence of faith and holy love." (St. Paul of the Cross)

Is kneeling really necessary?

Kneeling is a posture of reverence and adoration that is necessary for all those who are physically able. "It is, therefore, the keen desire of the Church that all of the faithful kneel at the feet of the Redeemer to tell Him how much they venerate and love Him." (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

Throughout Scripture, lay people, prophets, and saints have prostrated themselves or bowed down before God. Moses, Aaron, Abraham, and Joshua are but a few of those who are shown to prostrate themselves in the Bible. In the New Testament, the magi prostrate in front of the infant Jesus, as does the man tormented by unclean spirits, and as do the apostles at the Transfiguration of Jesus. In Revelation, the heavenly beings also prostrate.

Scripture also instructs us to bow and kneel in worship: "All the nations you have made shall come to bow before you, Lord, and give honor to your name." (PS 86:9); "All who sleep in the earth will bow low before God; All who have gone down into the dust will kneel in homage." (PS 22:30); "Enter, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us." (PS 95:6); "Exalt the LORD, our God; bow down before his footstool; holy is God!" (PS 99:5); "Exalt the LORD, our God; bow down before his holy mountain; holy is the LORD, our God." (PS 99:9); "Give to the LORD the glory due God's name. Bow down before the LORD'S holy splendor!" (PS 29:2); and "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of

those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (PHIL 2:10-11)

And, since "The perfection of religion is to imitate whom you adore" (St. Augustine), remember that Jesus himself prostrates in prayer before his Father. If you would bend your knee for an earthly king or queen, how much more should you show reverence towards your Lord and Creator!

Respecting the Holy Eucharist

"May all Christians have great and strong faith in the sacred mystery of his Body and Blood; may they worship it with great devotion and pious veneration" (The Council of Trent).

"The holy council teaches that this Sacrifice [of the Mass] is truly propitiatory, so that if we draw near to God with an upright heart and true faith, with fear and reverence, with sorrow and repentance, through the Mass we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (see Heb. 4:16). For by this oblation the Lord is appeased" (The Council of Trent).

The Council of Trent also states: "Holy things must be treated in a holy way and this sacrifice is the most holy of all things." In fact, the Eucharist is infinitely more precious than gold - *it is the very instrument that Our Lord used to purchase you.* "The Eucharist is the work of a measureless love" (St. Peter Julian Eymard).

The following should be observed by all with respect to the Holy Eucharist:

* When the Host is elevated during the Consecration, say silently "My Lord and My God". Historically, indulgences have been attached to this practice. According to St. Francis of Assisi: "All those are damned who see the Sacrament of the Body of Christ on the altar in the form of bread and wine by the words of our Lord in the hands of the priest, yet do not see or believe in spirit and in God that this is really the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

* Don't receive Communion if you are not properly disposed to do so. "*Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.*" (1COR 11:27) As stated by the Council of Trent: "No one who has a mortal sin on his conscience shall dare receive the Holy Eucharist before making a sacramental confession, regardless of how contrite he may think he is. This holy council declares that this custom is to be kept forever by all Christians." The Council also says that "If anyone presumes to teach, or preach, or stubbornly maintain, or defend in public disputation the opposite of this, he is excommunicated by his action".

* Remember to fast for at least one hour before receiving Holy Communion. Do not chew gum!

* You have an *indisputable* right to receive Communion in the traditional manner (on the tongue). You should NEVER feel compelled to take Holy Communion in the hand. Occasionally, a priest may seem confused if few parishioners receive communion on the tongue - simply be patient with the priest and remember that your right to receive Communion on the tongue *cannot* be disputed. Be firm, but patient. "*Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion in the hand.*" (Mother Teresa)

* Favor the consecrated hands of the priest dispensing Communion whenever possible. *Eucharistic ministers are supposed to be used only under extraordinary circumstances.* The Council of Trent states: "In the sacramental reception it has always been the custom in the Church of God that the laity receive Communion from the priests and that priests who are celebrating Mass give Communion to themselves. This custom should rightly and deservedly be kept as coming down from apostolic tradition."

* If possible, receive Communion in a kneeling position. Also, kneel after receiving Holy Communion (if you are physically able). Also kneel during other appropriate points in the Mass, *regardless of what others may be doing.* You are responsible to God only for your own piety in worship.

Praying after Mass

As stated by Pope Pius XII in Mediator Dei: "When the Mass, which is subject to special rules of the liturgy, is over, the person who has received Holy Communion is not thereby freed from his duty of thanksgiving; rather, it is most becoming that, when the Mass is finished, the person who has received the Eucharist should recollect himself, and in intimate union with the divine Master hold loving and fruitful converse with Him. Hence they have departed from the straight way of truth, who, adhering to the letter rather than the sense, assert and teach that, when Mass has ended, no such thanksgiving should be added, not only because the Mass itself is a thanksgiving, but also because this pertains to a private and personal act of piety and not to the good of the community. But, on the contrary, the very nature of the sacrament demands that its reception should produce rich fruits of Christian sanctity."

How should we dress?

"The dress of the body should not discredit the good of the soul." (St. Cyprian)

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