

REVERENCE AND ETIQUETTE AT MASS

The best time for us to prepare for Mass is during the week by praying over the readings for our full, active and conscious participation when we come to Mass. We gather on the Day of the Lord to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. Because we are meeting the Lord in Word and Sacrament, modesty in dress and at least business casual is most appropriate. Parents are the best models for good manners when teaching their children such behaviors as not chewing gum at Mass. Without judging why some may come late or leave early from Mass (for there may be good reasons at times), others may have developed a habit that ought to be broken. Planning to arrive 15 minutes early and already being seated before Mass begins helps all of us have some personal time for reflection and prayer. Once Mass begins we move from personal prayer to community prayer and worship of our triune God: Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The Rites of the Mass are public and communal worship of the people of God. At Sunday Mass we are all in communion with the Local Church of the entire Diocese of Fort Worth and with the Bishop who is the chief priest of our diocese. Just as Word and Eucharist are public worship at Mass, so too are all of the other Sacraments of the Church public worship and not our own private devotions. Members of the Assembly are the Body of Christ by their Baptism and we are in communion with the presiding priest, who acts in the person of Christ, the Head of the Body, by his Ordination. When we gather together as the Assembly, we become the Womb of God, giving birth to new members by celebrating publically the initiation Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at Mass and at the Easter Vigil. At the Last Supper the Lord Jesus gave us his own Body and Blood in the everlasting New Covenant of his saving Death and Resurrection. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life and makes present in sacrament the living mystery of the Lord's Passover from death to life. The sacrifice he anticipated on Holy Thursday was consummated on Good Friday as the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Our participation in the Mass gives us a unique share in his Passover for the Eucharist gives us a share in his divine life. Participating with reverence and etiquette at Mass is of utmost importance. Most especially, the reverence with which we receive the most precious Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist ought to be clear and intentional. Receive Communion in the hand by cradling one hand in the other or on the tongue that is visibly outside of the mouth. Another example is the use of applause at Mass. It is only permissible when the ordained presider calls upon the assembly to acknowledge and affirm those who receive sacraments, such as Baptism, First Communion, Marriage and Ordination or the blessing of couples celebrating marriage anniversaries. Spontaneous applause is inappropriate at other times during the Mass, such as after a layperson reads the Word of God at Mass or after the ordained clergy has proclaimed the Gospel or preached a homily. Applause is never appropriate during the Liturgy of the Eucharist: the Preparation of the Gifts or after hymns or meditation songs by choir members or by a cantor during the Communion Rite. These readings, proclamations, hymns and songs are not public performances. They are rather accompaniments to our prayer, meditation and communal worship. We are called to a posture of meditative reverence during these times at the Mass. Let us remind one another that we are in sacred time and in a sacred space and that our proper participation promotes piety and devotion that is consonant with the holiness of the Divine Liturgy.

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