10 Top Tips for Making the Most of Attending Holy Mass

In order to help our non-Catholic family, friends, and acquaintances feel more welcome and comfortable in our churches, and maybe even Catholics who have not been attending Holy Mass regularly, here are a few "need to know" tips you can read yourself or share with your family and friends as you drive to the Church. Our Sacraments are central to our faith and the most likely occasions for non-Catholics to be in our churches are for Sacraments and funerals. With each of these, we also celebrate the Holy Mass. For more information about the Sacraments, please see the latter part of this document.



1. **The sign of the Cross.** As Catholics, we make the sign of the cross when we pray. Here is how you do it: You do it all with your right hand. Holding your thumb to your pointy finger and your middle finger, you raise your hand to your forehead and say, "In the name of the Father". Then you lower your hand below your sternum and touch your abdomen with your three digits and say, "and of the Son". Then you move your hand to your left shoulder and say, "and of the Holy". Then you bring your hand to your right shoulder and say, "Spirit. Amen".

2. **Holy Water**. Holy water is water which has been blessed by a priest. As we enter the church, there is a holy water font near the entrance. This is your first

chance to practice the sign of the Cross. You briefly dip your right hand into the water in the font. This is usually just the finger tip of your pointy finger so you don't splash water all over yourself as you make the sign of the Cross with the holy water.

3. **Entering the Church**. When you find your desired pew, you don't just step in and sit down. First, you genuflect toward the tabernacle. The tabernacle is visible directly in the centre of the apse (behind the main altar). Genuflection is the placing of your right knee, lightly and briefly on the ground as you face the tabernacle. Then you can enter the pew. You genuflect before leaving the Church, also.

4. **After entering the pew,** you can sit until your companions are all in place, then you put the kneeler down in front of you and kneel. This is a nice opportunity to pray for a few minutes before Holy Mass starts. Sacred silence is important.

5. **Drinks and Snacks**. We do not eat, drink or chew chewing gum during Holy Mass.

6. **Mobile phones** should be put away and turned off; children should not be given loud electronic devices that may disturb others. Children are so welcome, and children will be children! We also understand that young children may need things to keep them occupied – this is all fine, but please avoid very noisy electronic devises. Encourage older children to 'pray with their eyes', getting them to focus in on what is happening during the Holy Mass.

7. **During the Holy Mass**. Once Holy Mass begins, please follow those around you in their actions. When others stand, you stand. When others sit you sit. When others kneel, you kneel. We observe sacred silence.

8. **A special note about communion**: This is the most Sacred part of the Holy Mass. Sacred silence is observed. Non-Catholics can line up for communion when Catholics do, but cannot receive communion. If you want a personal blessing, you

can approach the priest with your right hand on your left shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder. The priest will likely bless you, then you turn and follow the rest of the people back to your pew. The priest blesses everyone at the end of Mass anyway so you can remain in the pew the whole time while the rest of the people go up for communion. **The time during communion is a great time to pray.** For those Catholics who are receiving Communion, your hands must be held high for Fr, one hand on top on the other; the host must be put directly onto your mouth before you take a step to the side, make the sign of the cross and then walk back to pray at your pew.



9. **After the Mass is over**, you can kneel once again for a few moments and thank God for the good things in your life. We remain standing and singing until the priest has processed out of the church. As you leave your pew, you genuflect toward the tabernacle again, then you leave. You may then bless yourself with the holy water on the way out as well and make the sign of the cross once again.

10. **After Mass** the priest is commonly waiting at the main doors of the church. He usually takes the opportunity to greet people, chat a little bit and answer any questions people have. This is the best time to ask questions because everything is fresh in your mind and in the minds of the people you were with.

The Sacraments

Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey and pilgrimage of growth and discipleship continuing on to all eternity with God. Baptism is the Church's way of celebrating and experiencing the embrace of God – who calls us by name and loves us as we are.

Eucharist

The Eucharist literally means 'thanks-giving'. It is also known as the Mass, Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. The celebration is not simply a re-enactment of the Last Supper, but in a special way a making present of God in all his saving acts focused in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we also are nourished spiritually and brought closer to God. The word 'Mass' is derived from the Latin words in the dismissal at the very end of the service – 'Ite Missa est' – the Mass is ended, go in peace. It is through the doors of the Church that Eucharistic people are sent out in the world to live Eucharistic lives of thanksgiving, love and service in the world.

Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Confession, or Penance and Reconciliation) has three elements: conversion, confession and celebration. In it we find God's unconditional forgiveness; as a result we are called to forgive.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Sacrament of mature Christian commitment and a deepening of baptismal gifts. It is both a stirring up and a sealing of the gift of the Holy Spirit and is bestowed by the Bishop.

Marriage

The Sacrament of Marriage, or Holy Matrimony, is a public sign that one gives oneself totally to the other person. In marriage the husband and wife themselves are the ministers of the Sacrament. The presence of the Church is both to witness and to bestow God's blessing

Ordination

The Sacrament of Holy Orders, or Ordination, is the three-fold ministry of deacons, priests and bishops which have been in the Church since earliest times. In Ordination men and women are set apart by God, through the Holy Spirit to serve

the people of God, by preaching the word, celebrating the Sacraments and by showing the love of God in pastoral care.

Anointing

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, was only formerly known as the Last Rites or Extreme Unction, but is now used much more widely to impart God's blessing, his presence and his healing power. People are anointed with the holy oils blessed by the Bishop in the Cathedral on Maundy Thursday and given to the clergy to use with their people when they are sick, about to undergo an operation and at other major points in their lives.