



THE Journey Home

Spiritual preparation before Mass

A person's encounter with the Crucified and Risen Christ in the celebration of the Mass is not simply a private affair. This meeting always takes place as part of the action of the whole Church including the angels, the martyrs and all the saints.

To take our place amongst this great company and to receive the graces of Holy Communion should involve some preparation in order that we can abandon ourselves more completely to the saving mysteries that we celebrate.

For more information about Sunday Mass,
please go to the parish website for up to date information
or contact your parish priest.

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 *Diocese of
Brentwood*
Vicariate for Adult Formation


Formation, Mission & Relationship

How can we better prepare ourselves for the celebration of Mass?

We might reflect on the following three ways:

Prayer

When we pray, God does not change, but we do; God does not come down to our level, but we are raised into His Divine life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer helps our love of Christ to mature and it strengthens our desire to do the will of our Heavenly Father. Our individual prayer prepares us for the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass, the highpoint of all prayer.

Our prayer might include the Liturgy of the Hours as one special way of joining our prayers to Christ who, then, offers them to His Father. In this way, we are drawn into a deeper communion with the Blessed Trinity and the life of the Church.

We might also consider reflecting prayerfully throughout the week on the Mass readings for the following Sunday and by doing so become attentive to God speaking to us through His living word. This is sometimes called *lectio divina* or sacred reading.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, *lectio divina* focuses on the interior nourishment, if you like, the spiritual marrow, that sacred scripture uniquely provides. By savouring the sweetness of God's word, this form of meditative reading enables our hearts to burn with a renewed love for God.

Turning away from sin

Sin corrodes love by turning us away from God and rejecting the opportunities to love our neighbour. This deterioration might happen over time with an accumulation of venial or less serious sins blocking our hearts. If our sin is serious it can rupture our relationship with God and poison the bonds of friendship with others.

The good news of God's grace is that He has provided us with the means to restore our relationship with Him and with our brothers and sisters. By presenting our diseased hearts to the Lord, we are assured that He will heal the damaging effects of sin. His grace will flood those arteries that have become hardened by sin and will startle back into life those hearts that have gone into arrest.

Daily repentance, true contrition, and a regular use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation restore and strengthen our communion with the Blessed Trinity and with each other. Frequent confession helps us to grow in holiness and virtue.

If we are conscious of having committed a sin that was of grave matter and where we acted with full knowledge of its seriousness and with full and free consent, that is, a "mortal" sin, then we must hurry to Christ, the Divine Healer, who waits for us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that "When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect' (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible" (no. 1452).

By loving God and our neighbour.

The call of the Gospel to love challenges each one of us to respond by looking beyond ourselves to the needs of others. In part, our response will depend on our state of life. For example, the reality of the Cross embraced by the sick is different from the one inspiring the young adult volunteering at a refugee centre or the one challenging parents to be the best and first teachers of the faith to their children. Each of us, in our own way, makes real Christ's sacrificial love in our world, a love that has a special concern for the weakest, the poorest and the most despised. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that "the Eucharist commits us to the poor" (no. 1397).

The Body of Christ that is broken for us at Mass moves us to respond to all that is broken, bruised and hurting in humanity. The Blood of Christ shed for us provides us with the grace to shed our own self-interest in loving service of others. The honour we afford the Eucharist compels us to honour those considered "the least" by the world. And when this happens, we gather and support others along the path of salvation that is Christ the Lord.

