

Reflection

Where to start?

Perhaps by thinking what is it in the Mass that presently engages you most? Holy Communion? The scriptures? The gathering of the Church? The ministry of the priest, witnessing to God's mercy and love? Christ is truly present in all these things.

How have you experienced Christ's presence recently? As consolation? As challenge? How do you feel about this? Happy? Sad? Encouraged? Confused? All these feelings we can bring to our prayer and reflection.

Pope John Paul said recently that in the Eucharist not only that each of us receives Christ but also that there is the opportunity for Christ to receive each of us. We enter into the communion of friendship – we live through him and he lives in us.

Prayer

God our Father,
in all the churches scattered
throughout the world
you show forth the one, holy,
catholic and apostolic Church.
Through the gospel and the eucharist
bring your people together
in the Holy Spirit
and guide us in your love.

Make us a sign of your love
for all people,
and help us to show forth
the living presence of Christ
in the world,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Why don't you?

- Try to set aside time in each of the next 5 weeks to read, reflect and pray with these sheets.
- Pray for your parish during this time of reflection that it may find fresh encouragement to celebrate Mass worthily and proclaim the Gospel with confidence.

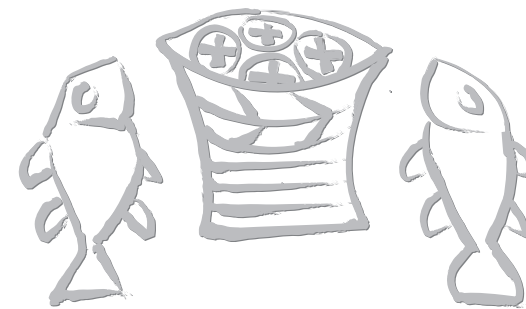
**Liturgy
Office**

**ENGLAND
& WALES**

This leaflet is one a series of resources produced by the Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to assist parishes reflect on their celebration of the Eucharist in the light of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Celebrating the Mass* and Leaflet © 2005 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Other resources are available from www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources C011

In Communion with Christ 1. Introduction



In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

As we enter church our hand reaches out to the font or stoup to touch our fingers in the holy water. With moistened fingers we bless ourselves in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit sketching the sign of the cross on our bodies.

At our baptism we were baptised water and in the name of the Trinity. Blessing ourselves as we enter church we recall our entry in the Church when we became a member of Christ's body here on earth.

*We are members
of Christ's body
here on earth*

St Paul reminds us that when we were baptised we were baptised into Christ's death so that we might share in his new life. Through his death on the cross we are able to share in his resurrection.

In this simple action we make at the beginning of Mass we reveal who we are and who we are called to be.

Looking at the Mass

This is the first of a series of six leaflets. The remaining five will focus on a different part of the Mass each time starting with the Introductory Rites, our gathering. The series uses Church documents to look at the liturgy in particular two recent ones: *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*.

Before looking at the parts in more detail it is an idea to have an overview, a map to see where we are going.

To this day the Church makes the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection in the Mass: in the **Liturgy of the Word** the assembly listens with hearts burning as the Lord speaks to it again and it responds with words of praise and petition; in the **Liturgy of the Eucharist** it takes bread and wine, gives thanks, breaks the bread, and receives the Body and Blood of Christ.

These two principal parts of the Mass are so closely connected as to form one single act of worship: the tables of God's word and of Christ's body are prepared, and from

In Communion with Christ

It hardly needs saying but the way in which we celebrate the Eucharist together is clearly of vital importance to the building up of the local Church (*Celebrating the Mass*, 10) The Mass makes us what we are, and helps us to become what we are called to be – for at its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, continuing and making available his saving work among us. (cf. *One Bread One Body*, 3)

The Mass is and offers us a most precious gift. It is not something that can be adequately summed up for us in a few words. It is about faith, and God's presence to us. It is something to treasure. We learn its meaning and value not all at once, but over time through the various experiences of our lives.

Sometimes though we can find ourselves just 'going through the motions'. If once we knew why we came to celebrate the Mass maybe now we are not so sure. So the Church invites us to consider again this life-giving

mystery that is the Eucharist, so as to deepen our love of the Mass.

Over the next weeks there will be a series of these leaflets helping us to reflect on different aspects of the Mass. They will offer a certain amount of teaching, a certain amount of reflection. But perhaps the most important thing that they offer is encouragement to us to take time and ponder on the Mass – how we ourselves take part in the celebration, week after week; and how we make connections between what we do at Mass and what we do in the rest of our lives, day after day, week after week, year after year.

There would be value in doing this as individuals, but in fact we are invited to do something still more worthwhile – to undertake this reflection together. So let us remember to pray for each other that through our prayer and reflection we might grow together into the image and likeness of Jesus the Lord.

The Mass is a precious gift

them the faithful are instructed and nourished; the spoken word of God announces the history of salvation, the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy. In addition to these two principal parts, there are also the **Introductory Rites**, which prepare the people for word and Eucharist, and the **Concluding Rites**, which brings the people's worship to a close and sends them out to witness and service. (cf. CTM 19–20)

We recognise Christ is present when we celebrate Mass. Present in the two tables of his word and his body and blood. Present also in the liturgical assembly gathered in his name and in the person of the minister. (cf. GIRM 27)

In the celebration of the Eucharist the assembly is united in and by the principal actions of gathering, listening to God's word, praying for life of the Church and the world, giving thanks, sharing communion and being sent out for the work of loving and serving God.

(CTM 24)