

Reflection

What have I got in common with the others who come here? In what ways am I different? How easy is it to recognise that when we are here together? Would it be more or less easy to recognise what unites us when we are not in church?

Can I respect the differences that we have? The different situations we find ourselves in – the parent with the children; the old lady by herself; the couple who seem so close to each other; the teenager who seems so resentful at being here?

Can I allow for our different ways? Those of us who want more quiet; those who want things less formal; those who want to sing more and those who want to sing less; those who like lots of change and those who don't?

Lord, that we might be one.

Prayer

The Church is favoured,
the dwelling place of God on earth:
a temple built of living stones,
founded on the apostles
with Jesus Christ its cornerstone.

Here may your children,
gathered around your altar,
celebrate the memorial of the Paschal
Lamb, and be fed at the table
of Christ's word and Christ's body.

Here may the whole world
clothed in the dignity
of the children of God,
enter with gladness your city of peace.
Amen

Why don't you?

- Find time to reflect again on Christ's call to follow him (John 1:35–42).
- Over the next weeks make a special effort to say 'hello' to someone whom you see often but do not know at Mass or in the area where you live.

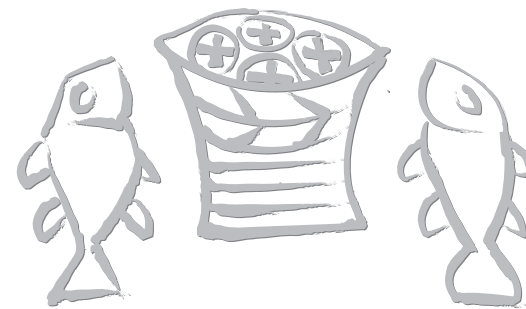
**Liturgy
Office**

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*. Excerpt from *Rite of Dedication of a Church* ©1978 ICEL, Inc. All rights reserved. Leaflet & *Celebrating the Mass* © 2005 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
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In Communion with Christ 2. Gathering



The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

The purpose of the Introductory Rites is to ensure that the faithful, who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.

In the Introductory Rites, Christ joins the Church to himself and gathers her children to join their voices to his perfect hymn of praise. Thus, the liturgical as-

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is the first instance
of Christ's presence
in the Liturgy*

sembly, "where two or three come together in Christ's name, and where he is found in their midst (cf. Mt 18:20), is the 'first image that the Church gives of herself'". Indeed the assembly itself is also the first instance of Christ's presence in the liturgy.

[*Celebrating the Mass* 139]

Looking at the Mass

Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession
Greeting
Penitential Act
[or Blessing and Sprinkling
of Water]
Gloria
Collect (Opening Prayer)

Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Concluding Rite

We come together to listen to God's word and be nourished by Christ's body and blood so that we can be his body in the world.

The **Introductory Rites** help to bring us together, once more, as the Body of Christ.

The assembly's worship begins with the opening song and **procession**, which help to create a sense of identity, a willingness to celebrate, and an awareness of the mystery being unfolded.

After making the Sign of the Cross together, the priest and people exchange formal **greetings** as a mutual acknowledgment and evocation of the presence of Christ in their midst and as a prayer for his sustaining power.

In Communion with Christ

It is baptism that makes us one with Christ, members of his Body, the Church. This unity is constantly renewed and sustained by our sharing in the Eucharist – not as individuals but as members of the Body. Eucharist, the Mass, can never be celebrated alone – always

We celebrate together, not only those visibly present in a particular place, but us together with the whole Church, on earth and in heaven.

This spiritual union is something more than eyes can see. And yet how we are when we are physically together in the Church matters a great deal. The way we gather and greet each other, the way we listen and pray together, conscious of being an assembly at prayer is not something independent of the Mass – these things are a full and integral part of the Mass itself. Our human togetherness is part of our common prayer.

- The simple greeting at the beginning of Mass is not just an outward sign, but when we 'do' it prayerfully, in Christ, what we do both fosters and brings about the communion of the Church.

- Likewise our other actions in the Mass – our standing, our kneeling, our sitting – we do them together (so far as our physical health allows) and what we do is not a matter of indifference but is a powerful sign of our unity: it both expresses and fosters the what it is we intend to do and the spiritual attitude in which we do it.

Already we are one in Christ, but at Mass, together, we seek to grow into deeper union with him.

Our society is sometimes so fragmented – broken along racial, cultural, religious divides. In the gospel of John we read how Christ prayed that all might be one.

At Mass we are invited to pray as *We are one* one – and for all *in Christ* our diversity, by

and large we manage to do this. Can we bring this experience of unity to bear on the lives we live outside Mass? Can we work for unity there too, serving our society by being a people dedicate themselves to healing hurts, overcoming fear of difference, and who build up community?

In the **Penitential Act** the assembly, gathered in God's presence, recognises its sinfulness and confesses the mystery of Christ's love.

The **blessing and sprinkling of water** serves as a memorial of Easter and Baptism. When it is used it replaces the Penitential Act. God is thanked for intervening to save us through the medium of water and is asked to continue to give forgiveness and life.

The **Gloria** is one of the Church's most ancient hymns. In the West its use was originally restricted to the opening of only the most solemn eucharistic celebrations. The *Gloria* is by nature a festive hymn.

The **collect** completes the introductory rites. Through petition to God, it expresses the character of the celebration and prepares the assembly to hear the word of God.

[*Celebrating the Mass* 140–150]