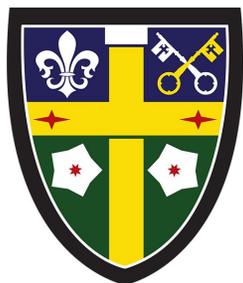




MASS ETIQUETTE

How to behave in the House of the Lord
so that all we do reveals our dignity as Christians
and honors our Lord Jesus Christ.



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What happens after Mass?

Traditionally, we sing a closing hymn, and then we should stay and make a prayer of thanksgiving after the Mass. We should not try to rush out, nor be the first out of the church. We should put the kneelers up and down quietly, and always respect the books we use and the pews we sit in, keeping them tidy for everyone. This is God's house so let us never leave it dirty or messy. Remember to always be respectful of our Lord and our King, Jesus Christ.



What happens before Mass?

Mostly, the answer is prayer. Our church is the House of God, so we always want to keep it clean for the Lord. We should never bring chewing gum into the church building. Dispose of it in a trashcan before you go into church. Food and drink is something else that does not belong in church. We are there to pray and adore God, not to snack.

When entering into the church, we first pass through the Narthex. When we are in the Narthex, or in Sunday School, or out in one of the gardens, or beneath the portico, we can talk and visit, but when we are in the church, we should behave in a more serious manner. Before we enter, we dip our fingers into the Holy Water font. This should remind us of our Baptism when we became Children of God, and the blessing prepares us to come into the presence of God. Then, we walk quietly into the church.

We genuflect at the end of the pew, and then we go into the pew to kneel and pray, so as to prepare ourselves to worship. We should never speak loudly in the church, or chitchat. Others around us will want to pray, and they will think we are being rude if we are noisy. We always want to be quiet and reflective in church.





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“Amen.” He will put the host in the palm of our hand and, using the other hand, we take the host and put it into our mouth. It is important to be very careful. We never want to drop a consecrated host because we were rushing.

Another way we may receive Communion is directly on the tongue. We come up with our hands held together or with our hands clasped and our fingers intertwined, held close to our chest. We bow before we come up to the priest, and then he says, “The Body of Christ” and we reply, “Amen.” At this point, we need to open our mouths and hold out our tongue. The priest will put the host on our tongue. It is important not to move so that the priest can carefully put the host on your tongue. Some people close their eyes, so that they won’t move. You don’t want to lick someone, or move quickly and risk a host falling on the floor. We need to be very careful and prayerful at Communion time.

Some people choose another option for receiving Holy Communion, which is to receive kneeling. When we do this, we receive on the tongue. Be careful when kneeling or getting up. We don’t want anyone to trip in line. If someone is kneeling, we need to wait until he/she is up before we go forward to receive Holy Communion.

What is the Mass?

The Mass is the most important prayer in the world. The Mass comes to us through Jesus and by way of His Apostles.

As the Church, we have been praying the Mass for two thousand years. We prayed it in the Upper Room (or the Cenacle) where Jesus shared His Last Supper with His closest friends, the Apostles. The Apostles spread this prayer around the world in their missionary efforts.

We prayed the Mass in homes and in the catacombs. We prayed it in great basilicas and in tiny parish churches. We have celebrated the Mass on high altars and on remote rocks.

Sometimes, there are just a couple of people at Mass and sometimes, there are millions. But always, as Catholics, we want to celebrate the Mass together. The Mass brings us unity and we want to express that unity in how we pray.

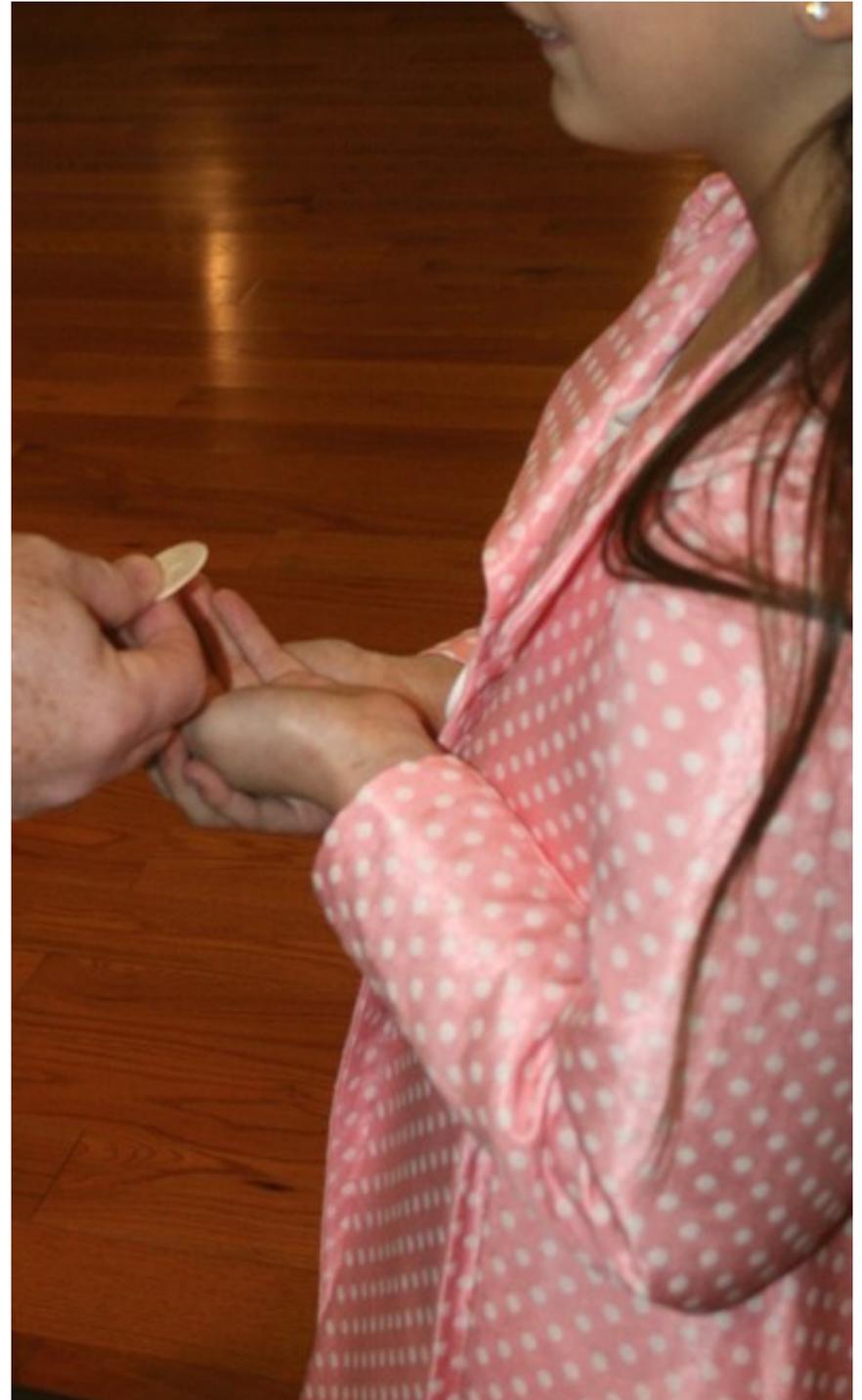
The following questions and answers will help us better know how to pray the Mass as Catholic people.

How should I dress for Mass?

If I am a doctor or nurse, a police officer or fireman on my way to work, I would likely dress in my uniform. If it is a weekday and I am a student, then I would come to Mass dressed in my uniform or in the clothes that I wear to school. But if it is a Sunday, then I should want to look my absolute best. Taking the time to be well attired to come to Mass means I love Jesus and have respect for his Bride, the Church. It also expresses self-respect. By looking my best, I reflect the dignity I have as a baptized Catholic, and I help communicate that message to others.

Dressing for Mass is not the same thing as dressing for a picnic. If possible, we should wear clothes that let everyone know we are going some place special. Shorts and sneakers might be suitable when we play, but at church, we should dress like ladies and gentlemen as much as possible. To dress our best for Jesus is very important. We should always dress modestly, too.

When Mass begins, we should join in the singing and the prayers. We should stand and sit and kneel at the proper times. If we listen to the readings and the priest's homily, we will learn about God's love for us, about Jesus, and about the people who lived long ago and who are a part of our big Church family. We will learn how to do what God wants us to do as they did.



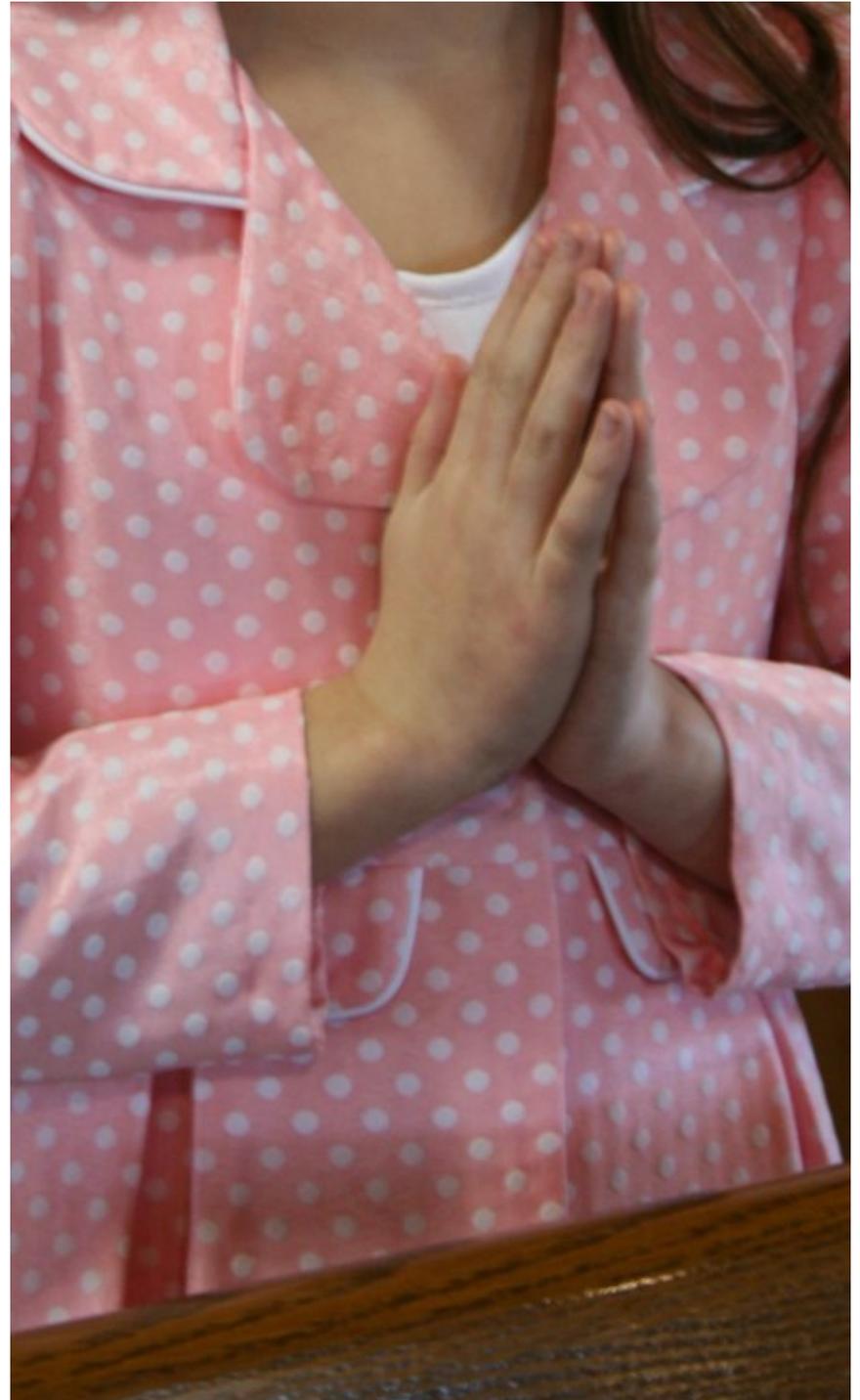
with our hands clasped before us. As Catholics, we should not raise our hands up even higher at the doxology of the Lord's Prayer either. Raise our voices in praise, yes, but let our hands show humility before the Lord.

How should I receive Holy Communion?

When we receive Communion, we are receiving the Lord into our heart, so we should always be free from grave sin and really want to live by the Church's teachings. We should not eat any food, or drink anything, for one hour before receiving Communion (except we may drink water, which is always ok). Medicine may also be taken, if needed. For various reasons, some people may not come up to Communion. That's okay. We should never judge anyone who doesn't receive Communion. It is just great that we are all at Mass.

As we come up to receive Communion, we should be very serious and prayerful. In our country, we have several ways that we may receive the host (the consecrated bread of Communion).

One way is to bow before we come to the priest, and then hold our hands in front of us, palms up, with one hand on top of the other, making a throne for Jesus our King or a cradle for Baby Jesus. The priest or deacon (or sometimes an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) will say, "The Body of Christ" and then we answer,



How should I pray the Lord's Prayer?

Praying the Our Father is a very important part of the Mass, because we are praying the very words Jesus gave us to pray. At Mass, we often sing the Lord's Prayer in Latin, English, or Spanish. St. Augustine said, "When we sing well, we pray twice." Even if we can't sing as well as someone else, God likes to hear the voice that He gave us praising Him. During the Mass, we always stand when we pray the Lord's Prayer, uniting our prayers with those around us. We should never rush, or go too slowly, so that we stand out. This is a prayer we do together as believers.

Praying the Our Father is really about our hearts, and not about our hands. When the priest invites us to pray together, he holds his hands out as if he wants to feel the rain falling down on top of him. He is gathering everyone's prayers together and offering them to the Father. This is called the "orans." It is the tradition of the Catholic Church that when we pray as part of the congregation, we put our palms together and point our fingers up towards Heaven. This special way of praying is very dignified and it indicates that we are humble before the Lord who bids us to boldly call Him our Father.

Sometimes Catholics may choose to hold hands with their loved ones, but we aren't asked to make prayer chains of clasped hands with the whole congregation. The more traditional way of praying the Our Father is

