

Three-Minute Liturgical Catechesis

Article I: Why Are We Here?

These short reflections on the Mass were originally inspired by the late Pope John Paul II's encouragement to us to engage in "that mystagogical catechesis so dear to the Fathers of the Church, by which the faithful are helped to understand the meaning of the liturgy's words and actions, to pass from its signs to the mystery which they contain, and to enter into that mystery in every aspect of their lives." [Apostolic Letter inaugurating the Year of the Eucharist, October 2004, *Mane Nobiscum Domine (Stay with us, Lord)*]. In that spirit these articles are offered to provide helpful material for brief reflections on the Eucharist. These materials are designed to take less than three minutes to read through, (even read out loud at the end of Mass, which is the way many parishes used them during the Year of the Eucharist) so they won't delay us long from other things on our schedules. These reflections are intended to give a bit of information about the Mass and a bit of inspiration that will help us live the Eucharist all week long, or in the Pope's words above "to enter into that mystery in every aspect of their lives."

Why are we here?

We begin today with a basic question for all of us: Why are we here? Why do we gather week after week for this liturgy we call the Mass?

There are probably a lot of answers to that question. Some of us come because it's a habit. Others come because they are grateful for God's gifts. And many of us come for several of those reasons combined.

More basic than all of those reasons, however, we all come because God has called us here. It was God who chose us to be members of the Church. It was God who called us to share God's own life through baptism. It was God who called us to carry on the mission of Christ in the world today. We come in response to God's call.

And we come for Eucharist, which comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. We gather here each week to give God thanks and praise. Sometimes we may forget that. It's easy to focus on what we hope to get out of coming to church rather than on giving thanks for what God has already given us.

The most important thing we find when we gather here is the presence of Christ himself. Christ reveals his presence to us in various ways. He is present in our very gathering, living in each of us who are his tabernacles. He is present as the leader of our worship. He speaks directly to us when God's word is proclaimed in our midst. He offers us his own body and blood as our food and drink so that we will be more closely united with him and with one another.

We come because Christ is here and because he calls us. Through baptism we all became members of his body, and we come here to remember who we are. Here we are reunited with one another and with him who is our head. And when we leave here, we go forth carrying Christ with us, taking him to our world that is in such need of his presence and his love. He teaches us and feeds us here to strengthen us to be Christ-bearers all week. Let us go forth from this place to love and serve the Lord.