

## FAST

In the Eucharist, we are fed with the Bread of Life. As with any meal, having a hunger for the main course greatly enhances our experience. Fasting creates a hunger for the Lord.



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“To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church” (CCC, 1387). For Catholics of the Latin rite, the fast required is spelled out in the Code of Canon Law. It states that a person who is to receive the Eucharist is to fast “from any food and drink” for at least one hour “before holy communion” with the exception of “water and medicine” (Canon 919). Those who are elderly or sick, and their caretakers, are exempt from this law when the Eucharist is brought to them.

## INVITE

When Our Lord walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, at one point He “appeared to be going further.” The disciples invited Him, “Stay with us” (Lk. 24:29). This is the perfect sentiment to foster in our lives not only throughout the Eucharist, but at all times: we open our hearts to an encounter with Jesus.

## COMMUNE

Jesus revealed God as a communion of divine Persons — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He invited His followers to be a part of that communion. He told them:

“I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (Jn.14:18-20).



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Entering into this communion with Jesus is never a solitary act. If you want to get more out of the Eucharist, you will offer yourself, “die to yourself,” and enter into communion with Christ as you receive His Body and Blood, and as you worship with His Body, the Church.

## EVANGELIZE

At every Mass, we experience something to be shared with the world. Pope John Paul II has emphasized this, saying:

Once we have truly met the Risen One by partaking of His body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we have experienced. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian *an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization* (Pope John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, paragraph 24).

The word “Mass” is derived from the Latin dismissal *ite missa est*, which literally means, “Go, you are sent.” The Communion that we experience with Our Lord at the Eucharist sustains and prepares us for a mission — to bring Christ to the world!

## Our Response

Offering our sacrifice with Christ will be unique to each of us. Some will find it easier to adore than to serve. Others find it easy to respond, but difficult to confess. Each of these nine actions corresponds directly to parts of the Eucharist; to get more out of the Mass, we must participate in it fully — all of it. A great banquet awaits us if we are willing to make the sacrifice.

## Where to Go for More Information:

### Books:

Dubruiel, Michael. *How To Get the Most Out of the Eucharist*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The How-To Book of the Mass*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2002.

Gortler, Rosemarie, and Donna Piscitelli. *The Mass Book for Children*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.

McBride, Alfred, O.Praem. *Celebrating the Mass: A Guide for Understanding and Loving the Mass More Deeply*. Our Sunday Visitor, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Holy Eucharist Prayer Book*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2005.

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# How to Get More Out of the Mass



COVER ART, “LIFTED UP,” BY CAROL EIDER NAWOLI

What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes “to the end” (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.

—Pope John Paul II

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Catholics believe that, on the night before He died, Jesus gave His Apostles an incredible gift — a way that He would continue to be present in His Church, through His Body and Blood, in the Eucharist. Every time we gather to celebrate Mass, we partake of that very same event. Are we getting as much as we can from our participation in the Eucharist? Or are we:

- Bored, waiting to be entertained?
- Sitting in judgment of those around us?
- Daydreaming about what we'll do later in the day?

### The Source and Summit of the Whole Christian Life

The Second Vatican Council taught that, for Catholics, “Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is the source and summit of the whole Christian life; they offer the divine victim to God, *and offer themselves along with it.*”

This concept of offering ourselves at Mass may be foreign to us. But without this attitude, we are likely to find that we are not “hungry” enough to enjoy the Eucharistic banquet that Our Lord has called us to share.

### Our S.A.C.R.I.F.I.C.E.

Here are nine concrete steps to help you to get more out of the Mass by focusing on the sacrifice *you* can offer with Christ:

- SERVE**  
Obey the command that Jesus gave at the first Eucharist.
- ADORE**  
Realize the great gift God is offering you!
- CONFESS**  
Believe in God’s power to make up for your weaknesses.
- RESPOND**  
Function as a member of the Body of Christ.
- INCLINE**  
Listen intently to the Word of God.
- FAST**  
Bring a hearty appetite to the Eucharist.
- INVITE**  
Open yourself to a relationship with Jesus.
- COMMUNE**  
Become one with Christ.
- EVANGELIZE**  
Share the Lord with others.



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### SERVE

At the first Eucharist, Jesus did something unexpected. He rose from the table and began to wash the feet of His disciples. Then He told them:

“I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn. 13:15).

Bringing an attitude of service to the Eucharist is a way to fulfill Jesus’ command. Rather than coming with an attitude of “what can be done for me” at Mass, we imitate Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve . . . and we ask, “How can I be of service to the Lord at this Eucharist?”

### ADORE

We encounter the “real” Jesus at the Eucharist. We hear God’s Word proclaimed in the Scriptures, and we receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Savior. Spending time adoring the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist outside of Mass can help us to better appreciate the intimate encounter that we are privileged to have with Him at every celebration of the Mass, when we become living tabernacles. Adoration helps us to approach Him in a devout way and experience the great love that He has for us, as He comes to us in Word and Sacrament.



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### CONFESS

Focusing on the image of Jesus on the cross should remind us of how much God loves each of us, and the horrible price of our sins. Think of the words that Jesus spoke from the cross:

- “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34), expressing forgiveness.
- “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” (Lk. 23:46), proclaiming trust in God.



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If we want to get more out of the Mass, we need to be humble: we realize how we fail to live up to the great gift of God’s love we have been given. We confess any serious sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Mass, and we place all of our trust in God’s mercy

and love when we publicly proclaim at the Eucharist that we “believe” in Him.

### RESPOND

At the Eucharist we become one with Christ, and He promises:

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (Jn. 15:7).

We “abide in Christ” by the way we respond while at the Eucharist.

Every celebration of the Eucharist provides us with a variety of ways to respond to Christ in the way we pray, sing, and move with the community. Some of these require sacrificing our personal tastes and likes for the good of the whole (maybe you don’t like the choice of music, or find it difficult to offer a sign of peace to those next to you). When we participate fully in the Eucharist by our responses, we keep in mind that we make up the one Body of Christ.

### INCLINE

Inclining our ears to the Lord is one way of offering the sacrifice of our thoughts, in order to first listen to what God has to say. It puts us into a posture of readiness. When we hear “A reading from . . .,” we raise our level of attention, because the God who created the universe is about to speak to us through the Scriptures.

*To get more out of the Word of God we hear proclaimed at every Mass:*

- P**... Prepare
- R**... Read
- A**... Attend
- Y**... Yield

**P** Prepare by studying Scripture and coming to a better understanding of how Catholics approach and interpret the Bible. The less familiar we are with the Scripture that we hear proclaimed at the Eucharist, the more likely we are to be distracted rather than fed by what we hear.

**R** Read the Mass readings beforehand. This is something that every lector, deacon, and priest is doing in preparation for proclaiming the Word. It is something that we who listen to the proclamation could do as well, even if it is just before the start of the liturgy.

**A** Attend to what is being proclaimed to us at the Eucharist. Lean forward, listen intently, incline your ear toward the spoken Word. Pay attention when certain passages seem to jump out at you as you listen. Why does this phrase seem especially meaningful? Ask yourself what God is asking you to do in response to what you have heard.

**Y** Yield to what God is asking of you and respond with a “yes.” Every celebration of the Eucharist is a renewing of the covenant between God and us. God waits for our response.



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