

MASS: The Church's Wedding Banquet

- Mass celebrates the **Marriage** of Mankind with God:
 - Christ & His Church entering an intimate, **Spousal Union** (entrustment of your heart to Him, His to you)
 - God obligates Himself to you in a permanent **Covenant Promise** (He will never divorce you)
- Mass is the Wedding **Meal** wherein the Church feasts with God:
 - Feast of the **Word** of God (receiving God's Word: Jesus Christ)
 - Feast of the **Flesh** of Christ (receiving God's Eucharist: Jesus Christ)
- Mass commemorates the **Sacrifice** of Christ the Bridegroom for His Bride, the Church:
 - A sacrifice of **Gratitude** ('Eucharist' means '*giving thanks*' for His sacrifice for you)
 - A sacrificial **Memorial** (makes present His wedding vows to remain faithful to you always)

The Invitation

YOU'RE INVITED!

to the wedding banquet of Christ this & every Sunday at a Catholic Church near you!

___ Count me in! ___ If I have time ___ I've already got plans

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.'" Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike,* and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. He said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen." - Matthew 22: 2-14

God invites you to Mass to renew His vows with you. The Giver is also the Gift, so He offers Himself for you:

- To say **YES** to Mass is to say YES to God's spousal gift
- To say **NO** to Mass is to reject God Himself
- To show up without a **wedding garment** is an arrogant refusal to be open to God's Gift!

Clothe Yourself: WeARRR your Wedding GARRRment!

- Yesterday, we discussed the dialogue of prayer: **A**cknowledge, **R**elate, **R**eceive, **R**espond
- Today, notice how Mass, like all conversation, is also a dialogue with ARRR at every turn:
 - (1) **Introductory Rites: ACKNOWLEDGE** God's presence and our sinfulness
 - *Acknowledge* his presence with sign of the cross ('In the name of the Father...')
 - *Relate* your sinfulness in the penitential rite ('I have sinned through my most grievous fault')
 - *Receive* his mercy for your sins ('may almighty God have mercy on us...')
 - *Respond* to his love with joy and zeal (Gloria and Collect Prayer)
 - (2) **Liturgy of the Word: RELATE** our lives to the Word of God proclaimed to us
 - *Acknowledge* the Word ('The Word of the Lord...thanks be to God')
 - *Relate* the Word (God relating his Word to you, you relating your life to his Word)
 - *Receive* the fruits of the Word (What moved, delighted, and challenged you?)
 - *Respond* to the Word with charity (intercessory prayers for the Church and world)
 - (3) **Liturgy of the Eucharist: RECEIVE** the greatest gift of God, the Eucharist
 - *Acknowledge* the Lord ('Behold the Lamb of God')
 - *Relate* your need to him ('Lord, I am not worthy...')
 - *Receive* the Eucharist (Though you are unworthy, the Lord chooses to dwell in you!)
 - *Respond* to the gift (Prayer after Communion...mind what it is calling you to do with the gift!)
 - (4) **Concluding Rites: RESPOND** by '*announcing the Gospel*' and '*glorifying God by our lives*'
 - *Acknowledge* the Lord's presence ('The Lord be with you')
 - *Relate* your perception of his presence ('And with your Spirit')
 - *Receive* God's blessing ('May almighty God bless you, the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit')
 - *Respond* by living the commission ('Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life')

COMING PREPARED for Mass:

- **COME** to Mass knowing your **sins**, the **scriptures**, and the **grace** you will ask for.
 - Have a simple awareness of what **sins** you come with. Don't hold them in. Let God give you His mercy!
 - Hear the **scriptures**. Relate them to your life. They are stories that make sense of your life.
 - Ask for a particular **grace** at every Mass. What do you need most from God this week? Ask Him for it.
- **LEAVE** Mass knowing your **response** to God's mercy, the Word, and the Eucharist.
 - What will you do differently this week? What do you need to change in your life?
 - How has his mercy, Word, and Eucharist transformed you?

TIPS for getting the MOST out of Mass...**Before Mass Begins:**

- **READ** the Sunday Scriptures a few days beforehand (USCCB.org provides easy access to readings)
- **JOURNAL**. Come with a notepad to write down thoughts, insights, and takeaways. Review these at the end of each month and year. You will be amazed at what you learn and how you grow!
- **ARRIVE** a few minutes early to pray and reflect (what am I here for today? what do I most need?)
- **EXPECT** God to show up at Mass. Expect to be transformed. Mass is an obligation for us only because God has already obligated himself to be there!
- **TURN OFF** your phone. Unless you are really expecting an emergency call from someone, you will not need your phone at Mass. Scripture readings, Mass parts, and songs are all available in your pew.

During Mass:

- **PARTICIPATE**. Yes, that means responding, singing (softly if you can't hold a tune!), sitting near another parishioner so you can share Christ's peace with them.
- **PAY ATTENTION** to the words of the prayers. What is God trying to tell his Church in the Collect Prayer, Eucharistic Prayer, and Prayer after Communion? See if you can sum it up each week with a few words.
- **THANK** God. Mass is a gift and a blessing. If Mass seems boring, remember the Eucharist you will receive. You may consider staying after Mass a minute or two to say thank you to God and to solidify how he is calling you to respond to his grace this week.

En-during Mass:

- **NO MASS IS PERFECT**. No, not even the Last Supper...Judas left after communion. If you demand a Church that does 'church' perfectly, you will never be satisfied! Church is made up of sinners.
- **OFFER** distractions to God (remember, God also invited the crying babies to Mass!)
- **MISTAKES** happen. Priests and ministers are fallen human beings...they err. Bad homilies, musical off notes, server blunders, hospitality oversights, sound system malfunctions occasionally happen. God realizes this. The Holy Spirit still comes! Expect God to show up even at messy liturgies!
- **DISTRACTIONS** happen. If you get distracted by your thoughts or another person, gently call yourself back to attention. If needed, sit in a front pew to focus attention on the sanctuary and not on what others are doing.
- **CHANGE IT UP**. Periodically sit in a different place in the Church. It will give you a new perspective and allow you to meet new people. If you get distracted often, it may help keep Mass fresh and interesting.

After Mass 'Aftermath':

- **RELISH** throughout the week the grace, mercy, Word, and Eucharist you received at Mass.
- **PREPARE** yourself for Mass next Sunday. Note the blessings and challenges of the week. Visit USCCB.org and pray with the Sunday Scriptures before/after a meal. Bring your heart movements with you on Sunday.
- **SHARE** your experience at Mass with at least 1 other person each week. Instead of telling people they "need to go to Mass," just share your graced experience with them and let them decide whether or not they want to accept God's invitation. You can invite them, but give them time to RSVP. Prophetically share how God is working in your life without being pushy or imposing. We all know they need God, but they may need some time to realize this for themselves. If they see how Mass is transforming you, they will start to desire it. Be Jesus for them.