

## The Gathering Rites

The Roman Catholic Mass is filled with rituals and items which even many Catholics forget along the way. But the true beauty of the Mass is seen when you break it down into its components and explain each of the steps in a way that others might understand more clearly.

The Gathering Rites are designed to bring people into a state of prayer and humility centering on Christ's grace given freely for our salvation and our reconciliation. The Gathering Rites actually begin at home. Our preparation for coming to Mass should be different than getting ready for work or school. Have we prepared by looking at the readings ahead of time? Do we dress differently? Do we pray and come ready to worship in a state of mind different than other days of the week? How we prepare for Mass affects our celebration of Mass.

Upon entering the church, we dip our fingers in Holy Water to bless ourselves, remind ourselves of our Baptism and to show reverence for the House of God. This continues the mental journey into a sense of worship.

We genuflect or bow, looking at the crucifix and making the sign of the cross...remembering Christ's Crucifixion. We should come early enough to spend time in silent prayer, remembering our need for forgiveness and entering fully into an attitude of prayer and worship.

As the Gathering Song begins, we stand to show reverence for the Presence of Christ in the Word as the Book of Gospels is carried into the worship space. This is the first visible presence of Christ among us. The procession, as all processions are, is accompanied by music. The song reflects the season, introduces a theme from the day's scriptures and unites us in a common voice around a common table, focusing us, calling us to prayer and creating a sense of being gathered in celebration. Therefore, the gathering song is much more than "traveling music" to get the priest from the door to the chair!

The ministers reverence the altar by kissing it, remembering the sacrifice Christ paid for our salvation. The presider leads the people in the Sign of the Cross. To read more about the origin and history of Christians making the Sign of

the Cross go to: <http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/faith/praying/2010/08-24/making-the-sign-of-the-cross>

The greeting “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” proclaims the Lord’s presence in the gathered community. (Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name...) We respond “and with Your Spirit” acknowledging the presence of the Spirit in the person of the priest by virtue of his ordination.

An introduction to mass may be given preparing us for what we will hear in the readings.

During the Penitential Act we confess our sinfulness to put ourselves in the proper condition for the celebration of the Mass. Then we acknowledge our praise and gratitude for forgiveness and salvation in The Gloria. This powerful and ancient hymn of praise begins by echoing the words of the Angels...Glory to God in the highest and it should be sung whenever possible. It is omitted in Advent and Lent and by its absence expresses the penitential dimension of these seasons.

The Opening Prayer or Collect concludes the Introductory Rites. This entire Rite has been a call to prayer and silence should then be given for us to pray to the Lord followed by the celebrant gathering up or “Collecting” the prayers in a summation, bring it to the Lord.