

“THIS IS MY BODY”

Parish Preparation for Special Ministers of the Eucharist



St Peter in Chains Parish Community, Ardrossan, North Ayrshire
Training in Three Sessions

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These Preparation Meetings are intended to support new Special Ministers of the Eucharist within our Parish Community. The Preparation includes **three** Sessions and the **Ceremony of Commission** in the Parish Church.

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explains briefly the Structure and Meaning of the Mass as we celebrate in today's Liturgy

Session 2

explores aspects of the Theology of the Eucharist and provides for practice in administering the Sacred Host

Session 3

looks at different issues of distributing Holy Communion in the Liturgy and to the sick and provides for practice in offering the Precious Blood in the chalice.

SESSION ONE

The family of God

The Structure and Meaning of the Mass
as we celebrate in today's Liturgy

I. The Family of God

The Church is the Family of God. We discover anew the richness of the Church through the different ministries and services in our Liturgy: Deacons, Acolytes, Readers, Altar Servers, Organist, Choir, etc. All these are a service for God and also a service for each other.



The Church is built up with "living stones"

“Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us... Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers and sisters should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come: and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.”

(St Paul to the Romans 12,4-6)

2. Three Different Kinds of Liturgical Service in the Church

Ordained Ministry:

Bishop, priest, deacon.

Liturgical Service:

Organist, choir, sacristan, etc.

Special Ministry:

Readers, Cantors, Altar Servers, Eucharistic Ministers (*These are special responsibilities and involves training and permission*).

On the 25th January 1973, Pope Paul VI issued an Instruction called “*Immensae Caritatis*” which, among other things, permitted lay people to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion during the Mass and also for the sick. This is not something new. An ancient custom of the Church was for people to take Holy Communion home to sick relatives and also to give themselves Holy Communion during the week if no priest was available.

3. Signs and Symbols in the Mass

In 1562, Pope Pius V instituted a reform in the Mass and introduced the “Tridentine Mass” (taken from the Council of Treveris). This became the only possible way to celebrate Mass in the worldwide Church.

1963 saw another great reform in the Liturgy. The Bishops gathered in Rome for the II Vatican Council introduced the “Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy” and the Mass as we know it today began to take shape. The aim of the reform was to enable everyone to take part properly, not as spectators, but with complete heart and mind. 2147 Bishops were in favour of the reform, only 4 were against it. The reform involved: A simplification of the Rites, Holy Scripture became the “treasure chest” of the Church, the Sermon was given a new status, the Prayers of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers) were introduced, the Mother Tongue was allowed, although the Latin texts were not intended to disappear altogether, the initiative of Pope Pius X to allow more frequent Communion was applied.

What is Liturgy? Liturgy for us is not just a ceremony. It is an attitude to life, i.e. that everything we do, should be done in union with God, in a dialogue of love with the Lord. Through celebrating Liturgy, and in a special way through the Mass, we come together as a family, God takes away the sins of the world, we renew our world and we give God praise and glory. Liturgy sanctifies our world. The mission of the Church is evangelisation. How? Each person is called to “labour in the vineyard of the Lord”.

We need “liturgy” today. Our society stands under the “sign of Cain”. It runs away from God. When we celebrate Liturgy we bring our world back to God and we place our world and ourselves into the hands of God, into the supernatural reality. Where God is forgotten and rejected, Liturgy is also forgotten and rejected. The signs and symbols at Mass are signs of a greater and higher reality.

4. Celebration of the Mass - In Two Parts

The Mass is divided into two main parts: The **Liturgy of the Word** and the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**.

The **Liturgy of the Word** includes:

The Opening, Penitential Rite, Gloria, Readings from Scripture, the Sermon, the Profession of Faith, and the Bidding Prayers.

The **Liturgy of the Eucharist** includes:

The Presentation of the Gifts, the Eucharist Prayer, Holy Communion, Final Blessing.

The Church and the Mass has signs and symbols that remind us of the supernatural reality and of God's presence in our lives. Let us consider a few of them...

Church Door:

Walking into the House of the Lord, we accept God's invitation of love, we don't leave the world behind, we go rather to the centre and the foundation of the world.

Steps:

We go up to the Lord, we look up to him, who is our strength and our Rock, we climb the mountain of the Lord.

Holy Water:

We bring to mind the Lord of Life, we remember our Baptism, we have the right to be here, God's House is our Home, we belong to Christ Jesus.

Genuflection:

We greet the Lord in his House, we bow our knee because he is God and we aren't.

Let us look closer at the First Part of the Mass:

Procession:

The priest and Altar Servers come in procession to the Altar. We are the Pilgrim People of God. Our way is homewards to the Father.

Vestments:

The liturgical Vestments call to mind the type of Celebration, the colours reflect the joy of Creation. Green is for the ordinary time in the Church's calendar, red is for the apostles and martyrs, for Pentecost and Good Friday, Purple is for Lent and Advent, for Reconciliation and for Funeral Rites, White is for every great Feast, i.e. Easter, Christmas, a special Occasion,

Holy Orders, Marriage. Rose colour is often used for the third week of Lent and Advent - Sundays to rejoice!

Altar:

The Altar is the centre of the Liturgy. The priest kisses the altar because it represents Christ. It is a special sign of reverence.

Sign of the Cross:

We do not come and celebrate in our own name, or in our own power. We begin and end the Celebration in the Sign of our Salvation.

Penitential Rite:

We remember that we are all sinners. Kyrie Eleison; Lord, have mercy! This was the call made to the Roman Emperors in ancient Rome.

Gloria:

We take up the song of the Angels at Bethlehem. We thank and praise God.

Readings:

We listen to the Word of the Lord. This is his message for us today. The priest kisses the Gospel Book, because this is Christ's words for us today. He is present in his Word. We stand to stress the importance of this moment, just like we would stand in a room, if an important person walked in.

Creed:

This is our profession of faith, from the times of the Council of Nicea, 325AD.

Bidding Prayers:

We bring our needs with Mary, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit to the Father.

Let us now look at the Second Part of the Mass:

Offertory:

We bring our Gifts of Bread and Wine, also our material gifts in thanksgiving and for God's work. The priest washes his hands. This comes from the time where fruit and food were also brought to the altar. The priest now, through this gesture, expresses his own sinfulness and his desire to be made pure and whole.

The Offertory Prayers are taken from the Jewish Feast of the Passover, the bread is "unleaven", i.e., without yeast - reminder of the Last Supper of Jesus, the word "host" comes from the Latin "Hostia" and means "victim", the Pall is the stiff board places over the chalice to protect the Precious Blood from dust and impurities, the cloths to clean the chalice after Holy Communion are called Purificators. Wine and a drop of water are placed into the chalice. This is a reminder of the Blood and Water flowing from the side of Jesus, it also imitates the Jewish custom of mixing water and wine at the time of Christ. It is a sign, furthermore, of the unity between the Divine and the Human in Christ and in us. The Paten is the plate where the large Host of the priest is placed. He uses a larger Host so that the Congregation can see better. Ciborium is the name given to the container for the Hosts to be distributed in. It is usually made of a precious metal.

Prayer Forms:

The priest uses different prayer forms to express different sentiments: Hands held together express humility and dependence, open hands are an expression of our childlike love of God.

Eucharistic Prayer:

The Eucharist Prayer has various forms today and they are always the same. The words of Consecration may not be changed. There are Eucharistic Prayers for normal use at Mass (four), there are ones for children (three), one for the Holy Year, two for Reconciliation, one for Indian Tribes, for the deaf, and now several new Prayers have been issued for various occasions, including the Great Jubilee Year.

Preface:

Act of Praise and Thanksgiving, which includes the theme of the Mass. Eucharist comes from the Greek language and means Thanksgiving.

Holy, Holy:

Taken from the Praise of Jesaja. The Angels are models of praise for God.

Consecration:

Bread and Wine becomes the Body and Blood of our Saviour. Transubstantiation is an attempt to explain in theology the Miracle of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist until the end of time.

Doxology:

"Through Him, with Him..." All creation unites in Christ to praise the Father. The "Great Amen" is our act of faith: "let it be".

Breaking of the Bread:

A little piece of the Sacred Host is broken and placed in the chalice. This is the sign of unity with the Bishop and refers back to the early Church. Three pieces of the Host represent the three "forms" of the Body of Christ: His earthly Body, his Body in the Tomb, and his resurrected Body. His Body is broken out of love for us.

Communion:

During the 4th Century it was common to use the hand to receive Holy Communion (see Cyril from Jerusalem). By the 9th Century, receiving Communion on the tongue was more usual. Both forms today are allowed and acceptable. Receiving Holy Communion from the Chalice is possible.

Blessing:

The Blessing is short, because the Eucharist continues into our day. We leave God's House "in peace", because we carry Christ in our hearts. We bring him to the world. All our worship should be a felt and lived reality in our lives.

SESSION TWO

Eucharist - Source and Summit of Faith

Theology of the Eucharist and the practice in administering the Sacred Host.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,
teach us to walk in your way more trustfully,
to accept your truth more faithfully,
and to share your life more lovingly.
By the power of the Holy Spirit
help us in our work for the Church
so that we may come as one family
to the Kingdom of the Father
where you live for ever and ever. Amen.



Christ is present in his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity

I. The Eucharist - Source and Summit of Faith

When we celebrate the Holy Mass, we participate with the whole Family of the Church in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist. This is the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church. The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium 11*). The other sacraments and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are orientated towards it. For in the blessed

Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Jesus Christ. The term Eucharist means an action of thanksgiving to God. Those who come to Mass express their gratitude to God. The Greek word *eucharistein* recall the Jewish blessings during a meal.

The Passover Meal:

It's origins are described in detail in Exodus, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13. It is the meal the Jewish people eat each year when they remember how what happened to them in the past, i.e. a people enslaved in Egypt became free in the Promised Land, is mysteriously made present now in the lives of the participants.

The Last Supper:

This reminds us of all the meals Jesus had eaten with people, especially with “the tax collectors and sinners”. This last meal was celebrated with his apostles (another “very mixed bunch of people”) in the context of a Passover Meal - at least, according to Matthew, Mark and Luke; John makes no direct mention of the Passover. Jesus instituted the Eucharist as the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again. The Eucharist is the memorial of his death and resurrection, the sacrament of love, the sign of unity, the bond of charity. During every Mass the one Sacrifice of the Cross is made present for us. There is no multiplication of Sacrifices.

St Paul:

He is the earliest writer to record the story he was given about the Last Supper. He notes the context, the main elements and finally the stark connection between celebrating the Eucharist and living it in daily life.

“For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, “This is my Body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me”. In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, “This cup is the New Covenant in my Blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me”. Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.”

(I Corinthians II, 23-26)

Early Church:

They called the Eucharist “the breaking of bread” and included it as part of the essence of what it meant to follow Jesus. From the beginning the Church has been faithful to the Lord’s command: “Do this in memory of me”. It is above all on the “first day of the week”, Sunday, the Day of Jesus’ Resurrection that the Christians met to “break the bread”. This same Celebration, handed down through the ages, remains the centre of the Church’s life.

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. The many miracles and signs worked through the apostles made a deep impression on everyone. The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. They went as a body to the Temple every day, but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.”

(Acts 2, 42-47)

2. Thanksgiving, Memorial, Sacrifice

The Eucharist is considered in three qualities:

thanksgiving and praise to the Father

the memorial of Christ

the presence of Christ by the power of his word and of his Spirit.

Thanksgiving:

In the Eucharist, the whole of creation is presented to the Father through Christ: “Through him, with him and in him...” We thank God for everything good, great, everything beautiful.

Memorial:

It is the memorial of Christ's passover. The memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for us. These events, in a special way, become present and real. The Church commemorates Christ's Sacrifice and makes it present. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.

This memorial is celebrated by the whole Church. For this reason the Pope and the Bishops are always mentioned. Only that Eucharist can be regarded as legitimate, which is celebrated in communion with the Bishop. We also remember our brothers and sisters in heaven. We remember the Virgin Mary and the saints. In the Eucharist the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united with the offering and intercession of Christ.

The Presence of Christ:

Christ is truly and really present in the Eucharist. In the most blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained" (Council of Trent, 1551).

This change was often called transubstantiation: The whole substance of the bread and wine are changed into the whole substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, our Lord. The miracle of the Eucharist can only be understood in the light of faith.

3. The Eucharist in the Life of the Church

It is Christ himself through the ministry of the priest offers the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.

The essential signs of the Eucharist are wheat bread and grape wine. Over these signs the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper.

Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Holy Communion must be in a state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Church recommends that the faithful receive Holy Communion each time they participate in the Mass, she obliges them to do so at least once a year.

4. Administering the Sacred Host

Vocabulary: ciborium, corporal, paten, lavabo, pyx, etc.

We approach the Altar during Mass at the “Lamb of God”. We come to the middle of the Sanctuary and make a bow towards the Blessed Sacrament. We then move to the side of the Altar. When the priest makes a genuflection, the Eucharist Minister also genuflects. He or she receives Holy Communion “under both kinds” from the priest.

The Minister receives the ciborium from the priest and together with him go to the edge of the Sanctuary to distribute Holy Communion. As a member of the congregation comes forward the Minister shows the Host at eye level and says individually: “The Body of Christ”. It is important to wait for the response: “Amen”.

If there are too few Hosts, the Minister may break the Hosts in half in the Ciborium.

If a Host is dropped, the Minister calmly picks it up and holds it until Communion is finished and then, if possible, consumes the Host.

After Holy Communion the Minister brings the ciborium to the altar, Near the High Altar there is a small dish with water and a cloth, so that the Minister can wash his or her fingers. He or she then returns to the front of the Sanctuary and bows again, and then returns to his or her seat.

If a child, a non-Catholic, or someone who does not want to receive communion comes up with their arms crossed in front of them, the Minister makes a small sign of the cross on the forehead and says: “The Blessing of Christ”.

If I know that the person asking for Communion is not entitled to receive, always give and never refuse. Afterwards a quiet word with the priest can help with any misgivings.

If someone appears to be drunk (remember illness, or legitimate medication can give the impression of being drunk), try and give a blessing rather than the Host which may be abused. In all events - use common sense and do not convey alarm. Don't panic!

The purification of the Chalice and Paten after Holy Communion should be done with great reverence and care. This prayer is said: *"May I receive these gifts with purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and forever. Amen."*

When we distribute Holy Communion to the sick, we should remember the following considerations: Give Holy Communion first, then if possible stay a while for a chat. The short Service of Holy Communion is more or less like this:

- *Sign of the Cross*
- *Lord have mercy or "I confess"*
- *The "Our Father" Prayer*
- *The "Hail Mary" Prayer*
- *The "Glory be to the Father" Prayer*
- *Then the Prayer for our deceased loved ones: "Eternal rest, grant unto them O Lord..."*
- *"Behold the Lamb of God"*
- *"Lord, I am not worthy..."*
- *Then, give the Sacred Host with the words: "The Body of Christ"; the recipient answers: "Amen".*
- *A short period of silence*
- *Final Blessing.*

If any Hosts remain, the Eucharistic Minister should consume them immediately and say the prayer: *"May I receive these gifts with purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and forever. Amen"*

SESSION THREE

Everyday Sanctity

Christian Spirituality and administering
the Chalice for Holy Communion.

I. Everyday Sanctity

The Spirituality of a Christian, fully committed to his faith is called: Everyday Sanctity. This is not the Sanctity of Sunday, it is the Sanctity of the other six days of the week. The “Everyday Saint” tries to do ordinary things extraordinary well, i.e. out of love for God and in union with God.



We are all called to be saints in our daily lives

The natural and the supernatural world are seen as one great reality.

Everything and everyone is a “ladder”, a “bridge” to God.

This type of Sanctity is sorely needed in today’s Church: Catholics today look for lived Christianity. Committed Christians are the best “Bible”. People long for lived sanctity, lived faith, the “Fifth Gospel” is the Gospel, which is written, but lived in everyday life. This is Everyday Sanctity.

Everyday Sanctity with God

In all the pressures of life, we need to find a “resting place” in God himself. In this way we become different people, more secure people. Our life with God is the foundation of everything else.

Everyday Sanctity with God means to take seriously the first Commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.

Our love for God must be generous; it must be in harmony with all the other Christian duties of our life, it must touch our heart.

We strive to love God in daily life, because we know that we are loved by God. It is God's love that created our world, maintains our world, and governs our world. He has sent us Jesus Christ as the greatest proof of his love.

God wants to be loved by us. God understands the human heart. He knows that we can love the most, when we know that we are loved by someone else.

Our love for God proves itself in following his Commandments. The love of the Lawgiver leads to the love of the law.

Our love for God proves itself in striving to avoid sin.

Our love for God is nourished and strengthened through a life of prayer. Prayer is a "tap" of endless strength. It is the great "power" in the Kingdom of God. Anything we do in union with God can be a prayer. Prayer means to detach myself from the pressures of everyday life and attach myself to God. We need personal traditions and a framework to pray properly, otherwise it doesn't work.

Everyday Sanctity at work

We show our love for God through our work and our attitude to work. Most of our day is taken up through work. Here we have to realize our relationship with God. There is something wrong if we encounter a Christian who prays a great deal, but sees no value in work, or has no interest in the needs of other people.

Work here means loving God through my occupation, profession, job; through the things that I use; and through my suffering

God is a Creator, he is "activity". He does everything out of love.

We have to put "God" back into work again and discover him again. To do ordinary things, extraordinary well. Everyday Sanctity means that when we do something, we do it with all our minds and heart.

The things that we use and see around us should remind us of God. St Augustine called this "*nutus Dei*", a greeting from God. This can be the wonders of nature, the greatness of human merit and technology, etc. Everything can be and is a song of praise for God, the Creator.

Materialism means that we have forgotten to see the Lord in the things that we use and see around us.

Everyday Sanctity means that we discover God also in suffering. As Christians we put God between us and suffering.

Everyday Sanctity and the people around us

Everyday Sanctity means that we discover God in each other. God lives in our hearts and we adore the living God in our respect for each other.

We take seriously: Love your neighbour as yourself... Why? Because God lives in them and he alone gives human dignity.

The Lord said: *“Whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do unto me...”*

2. Administering the Chalice

Receiving Holy Communion under both kinds is not new: Pope Gelasius I (492-496) insisted that people should “either receive the Sacrament in its entirety or stay away from it altogether, for the dividing of the one and the same mystery cannot be done without grave sacrilege”.

Until 12th and 13th centuries it was normal to receive Holy Communion in both kinds. For some, infants and the gravely ill, for example, the one, appropriate kind could be a spoonful of the Precious Blood.

From being an acceptable alternative under certain conditions, reception in one kind was to become the norm. Several reasons are suggested:

By the Middle ages, lay people rarely received Holy Communion at all. They had become spectators. What they could see was the elevated Host, so devotion became attached to that which was seen. The Chalice, hidden from view by the priest’s body, was not elevated until the 16th century Council of Trent. The Feast of Corpus Christi, with its procession of the Monstrance was introduced in 1246, whereas the Feast of the Precious Blood existed just from 1842.

The priest offered the Sacrifice of the Mass for all, therefore there was no need for people to receive. Hence the tradition developed of the priest receiving Holy Communion alone.

The Protestant Reformers read the Gospels and noted that “drink this, all of you” was not practised at Mass. They then used the “right to chalice” as a cause to fight for. Rome reacted: What had been just a custom now become an important matter of doctrine armed with prohibitions.

The true Sacrament of Christ is received under either species. However it is considered that the sign-value of Holy Communion *“has a fuller form when it is received under both kinds”*. *The faithful should be “encouraged to desire Communion under both kinds, in which the meaning of the Eucharistic Banquet is more signified.”*

Some practical points:

Vocabulary: Chalice, purificator, purify, vessels, cruet...

The Chalice has to be held securely: The Minister says: “The Blood of Christ” and waits for the “amen” before administering the Chalice. The rim of the Chalice is then wiped with the purificator. The Chalice is turned slightly before the next recipient.

If there is an accident or spillage, cover the area with a purificator. Deal with it after Mass using a lot of water. Don't panic!

If the Chalice is empty, cover it with a purificator and stand back.

Should children receive from the Chalice? Yes, but it may be necessary to help them hold the Chalice.

You cannot get AIDS or Hepatitis B from the Chalice. It is more likely that you would catch something from the air.

If you have a cold or flu, it is probably better not to minister. Please wash your hands before distributing Holy Communion.

No-one should not “self-serve” from the altar. Hosts and chalice should always be given and received as much as possible.

Please remember it is not allowed to keep or reserve the Blessed Sacrament at home for any length of time, including just one day or night. If Hosts remain after giving Holy Communion to the sick, they have to be consumed immediately. The accompany prayer is: *“May I receive these gifts with purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and forever. Amen.”*