



An Introduction to the
Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite
Traditional Latin Mass



Saint Joseph Latin Mass Society

Background

Welcome to Saint Mary Cathedral and to the traditional Latin Mass, also known as the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. This is the Mass that was celebrated in the Church of Rome from the time of Pope Saint Gregory the Great in the sixth century until approximately 1965. Pope Benedict XVI, recognizing the value of this form of liturgy, issued on July 7, 2007, the *motu proprio* *Summorum Pontificum* which recognizes the right of every Roman Catholic priest to use the traditional, 1962 Missal. The Holy Father desired the faithful to learn and appreciate the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. In the Austin Diocese, the St. Joseph Latin Mass Community (SJLMC) was formed under the direction of Bishop John McCarthy in Advent of 1988. The SJLMC began hosting the Extraordinary Form Mass at St. Joseph's Chapel in the residence of the Brothers of the Holy Cross at St. Edward's University. The community found a home in various parishes throughout the diocese until Bishop Gregory Aymond invited the community to Saint Mary Cathedral during Easter time of 2007 and is currently known as St. Joseph Latin Mass Society.

Differences

If you are not familiar with the traditional Roman liturgy, there are several things you will notice immediately. To begin with, every movement, every word of the priest is carefully choreographed. The Mass is primarily the action of Jesus Christ the High Priest, while the priest is His mere instrument. Thus, even though the priest is indispensable in conferring the sacrament, his own personality and idiosyncrasies are emptied out of the action of the altar so that our Lord's eternal priesthood may all the more clearly be seen through him.

For almost all of the Mass, the priest faces (liturgical) East, the direction symbolizing Christ, the Dawn from on high (Lk. 1:78). This is sometimes referred to as the "priest turning his back to the people," but the more accurate description is that the priest is facing the same direction as the people, leading us towards Christ, in the very direction from which He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (Mt. 24:27).

The Order of Mass

With respect to the Mass, you will notice that it does not begin immediately at the altar but is preceded by what are called the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. No one is worthy to enter into the Holy of Holies, and these prayers help both priest and congregation to realize this and to implore God's aid in entering into the sacred mysteries.

There are generally two readings rather than three in the traditional form of the Roman rite, a New Testament Epistle read from the "Epistle side" of the altar, which is on the right-hand side of the congregation, and the Gospel, which is read from the Gospel, or left-hand side, of the altar. When the priest recites the Gospel, he is turned somewhat towards the North, symbolically bringing the Light of Christ to the region of coldness and darkness. The readings are proclaimed in this manner first in Latin, and then from the pulpit in English immediately prior to the homily.

While the first half of the Mass is ordered towards preparing the faithful for the Sacrifice through repentance and instruction, the second half focuses on the Sacrifice itself. That is why the Offertory prayers are so precise in their explanation of the Eucharist. You will be able to follow these in the Mass booklets, which will be explained below.

After the Offertory comes the consecration, when the Son of God, through the agency of his living instrument the priest, makes bread and wine His own body, blood, soul, and divinity. The Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite shows an especially keen reverence for the Eucharist. The entire Eucharistic prayer, or canon, is said in a low voice so that a sacred silence may envelop the holiest part of the Mass. Once the priest consecrates the Host, he does not separate his thumbs and forefingers from then on until they are cleansed after Communion, lest a single particle of the Host be lost. For the same reason, it is only the priest, whose hands are specially consecrated at his ordination, who touches the Eucharist; and for the same reason, the Precious Blood is consumed only by the priest, for fear that any drops of It be spilled on the ground.

Holy Communion & Dismissal

All Catholics in a state of grace are welcome to receive Holy Communion. To do so, please kneel at the first row pew which is reserved for communion and await the priest. The priest will make the sign of the cross over you with the Host and say “Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam,” which means, “May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep thy soul unto life everlasting.” For practical reasons, the priest rather than the faithful also says the “Amen” at the end. While this is being said, the communicant opens his mouth and receives on the tongue.

As with any other Mass, there is a final prayer, blessing, and dismissal after the distribution of Holy Communion. The traditional Latin Mass also features, however, what is called “the Last Gospel,” a reading of the Prologue to the Gospel according to St. John. This magnificent passage, which St. Jerome once said should be written in gold, summarizes the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery grounding that of the Eucharist, and it ends by reminding us of our duty to bear witness to the Faith after we exit the four walls of this church.

Active Participation

To facilitate participation in this Mass, grey missals are in the pew racks, booklets and leaflets are available in the vestibule of the church. The blue-covered booklets contain all of the unchanging parts of the Mass; the leaflets contain the parts of the Mass that are proper to today’s feast. When the priest comes to one of these changing parts, called the “Propers,” the booklet will instruct you to consult the leaflet. That said, if you have not been to this form of the Mass before, there is a strong likelihood that you will still get lost at some point. Do not worry at all if this happens, but simply let the action of the Mass speak to your eyes and heart. If, on the other hand, you know the congregational responses, you are invited to join the server or choir in making them.

Finally, please silence personal digital devices before Mass begins. Thank you.

For more information, visit the website: AustinLatinMass.org