

Pre-Mass Catechesis

- Catechesis # 1 *“The Lord Be with you... and with your Spirit.”*
- Catechesis # 2 *“I confess...” and “Glory to God.”*
- Catechesis # 3 *“I Believe...” and “Consubstantial with the Father.”*
- Catechesis # 4 *Preface Dialogue “It is right and just” and “Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.”*
- Catechesis #5 *Eucharistic Prayers- “For you and for many”*
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Pre-Mass Catechesis

To be read by the priest, deacon, or lector five minutes before the start of each Mass for the weekend.

Catechesis # 1

Good morning (evening). Today, our parish joins every parish throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in a six week period of preparation for the new translation of the Roman Missal. (Since September, we have been using some of the new sung responses for the Mass.)

On the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, we will begin using the entire new translation for all the prayers we say and hear at Mass. To better prepare ourselves, we will have brief messages read before Mass during these six weeks. Additionally, lessons will be taught in our schools, religious education programs, and adult education sessions. Please read the bulletins for brief explanations as well. Together, we begin the important process of preparation so that we may better celebrate together the mystery of Christ's love.

In the readings for Mass this Sunday, we are reminded that God will supply for us whatever we need, "in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Our heavenly Father ***pours out upon us*** His grace every time we are gathered to celebrate the Most Holy Eucharist. The Mass is the Wedding Feast of the Lamb! We are invited to this wonderful celebration, not because we have made ourselves worthy, but because God makes us worthy out of his "goodness and kindness."

Each member of the Church has his or her place at this celebration. The new translation invites us to remember the unique role of the priest who leads our worship. At several important moments during the Mass, the priest says, "The Lord be with you." Our new response will be, "And with your spirit."

This new response reminds us of something very important: that God is about to do something for us through the ministry of the priest. Through the priest, He is about to supply us with the strength and grace we need. Because the priest has been consecrated by the Sacrament of Holy Orders, his "spirit" is now an instrument through which Christ makes Himself present to us. Through the priest, who acts as *alter Christus*, "another Christ," God the Father opens the doors to the heavenly banquet where we are invited to join the angels and saints.

Our new response is a response that the Church has been using at Mass for centuries. It is reminder that we are not celebrating any ordinary meal, but are participating in the feast of the Kingdom of God. Every word we speak in prayer at this celebration reminds us of that mystical reality. Here, where heaven and earth meet, we "behold our God, to whom we look to save us.

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Catechesis # 2

We believe in one Lord God who has “called us by name” and before whom we are to have no other gods. This is the first commandment, reminding us that God deserves all of our love. Yet, we know that there are times when our hearts wander away from loving God. We turn to lesser things that occupy our minds and imagination, that take time away from prayer and other responsibilities. At the start of each Mass, we pause to remember those times when we have not loved God and neighbor. We acknowledge that, through our “own fault,” we have “grievously sinned” against God. And so, we call upon the mercy and forgiveness of God to prepare our hearts to meet Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. For our venial sins, this act of sorrow and the reception of Holy Communion bring the forgiveness of sins.

However, for serious, mortal sins, we know that we must prepare ourselves first through the Sacrament of Confession before we present ourselves for Holy Communion. Saint Paul reminds us strikingly that receiving the Body of Christ unworthily does not help us, but we “eat our own condemnation.” The Penitential Act at Mass helps us to prepare our hearts to receive Christ worthily, after we have made good use of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Our confession of sins fills us with the light of forgiveness. As Christians, in the state of grace, we “shine like lights in the world.” Filled with God’s divine life, we become signs of God’s glory. A Father of the Church reminds us, “Life in man is the glory of God.” Forgiveness and glory go hand in hand. For this reason, after humbly confessing our sins at the start of Mass, we sing the great hymn of praise: “***Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will!***”

We praise God; we bless God; we adore God; we glorify God by living out fully and worthily the Christian life of adopted sons and daughters. Our lives become a living act of thanksgiving to God for sharing with us His divine life and glory. Through our glorious hymn of praise and worship, we are called to set aside whatever hinders us from bearing the life and glory of God in our hearts. Only then, can we join the great choir of angels in heaven who sing with us, “Glory to God in the highest.....have mercy on us!”

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Catechesis # 3

Today the Church commemorates World Mission Sunday. This is a beautiful reminder to us that our love for God is to be so strong, that we are impelled to share our faith with every person on earth. Far from being a private dimension of our lives, the Faith of the Church is something we are to live publically and about which we are to speak openly.

From the very beginning, Jesus sent out his disciples to boldly announce the Good News of the Kingdom. That Good News is Jesus Himself! He teaches us, that eternal life is found in loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and, by loving our neighbor as self. Spoken by Christ, we believe truly and firmly that this is the path to salvation for all men and women.

Every Sunday, we boldly renew our true and firm faith at Mass as we stand to make the profession of faith, the *Creed*. Each time we recite the Creed we confess that we believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Far from being just a list of doctrinal ideas, the Creed is a statement of our personal love for God as lived out in the community of the Church.

Our Profession of Faith is first and foremost the expression of our faith, hope, and love in God. It is the outer sign of our inner relationship with God.

Each of us must be prepared to say, “I believe” with all our heart, with all our soul, and with our mind. This is not something we do lightly. Each word of the Creed reveals to us the identity of God. These words are inspired by the words of the Bible and express the unwavering teaching of the Church from Her earliest days.

Although we might recite words that we do not use in everyday language, we must never forget that the identity of God is not something we can reduce to the ordinary. It is divine! And, as accurate and precise as we strive to be with our words, “God is always more” than what we can say about Him.

Through our Profession of Faith at the Sunday Eucharist, we are called to grow in faith, hope, and love. Saying this Creed together helps to strengthen us individually, so that we may never waver from speaking publically about Jesus Christ in all that we say and do. In this way, each of us is called to become a “missionary” in our neighborhoods and communities.

For one of the greatest acts of love for God and for our neighbor, is passing on the Faith to those who have not yet come to believe in Christ and to share in His Kingdom.

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Catechesis # 4

The “Lord of hosts” calls to us today from the voice of the Prophet Isaiah. The “Lord of hosts” calls us to listen, to follow His ways, and to give glory to His name. This is the “Lord of hosts” of whom we sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.” The Eucharistic Prayer begins with us “lifting up our hearts” to give God the worship that is “right and just.”

We then imitate the host of heavenly angels by taking upon our lips the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The prophet Isaiah tells of his mystical vision of heaven in which the angels are singing this hymn around the throne of God. Entering into the Eucharistic Prayer with these holy words, we are invited to lay aside our earthly cares and to “lift up our hearts” to share in heavenly joy and peace.

Sometimes our minds wander during Mass. When we are gathered together, distractions often come easily. It is our constant duty to strive to focus more deeply on the divine activity unfolding before us. ***Our attention is upon Christ, our Master and Teacher, who humbles Himself to become for us the Bread of Angels.***

At the same time, gathered before this earthly altar of the Lord, we stand before Christ on the Cross *and* before the throne of the Lamb in heaven. We focus our hearts on Christ who “showed himself as the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice.” This wondrous mystery, although beyond the full capacity of our minds, invites us to meditate upon its truth.

Each word, ritual action, and outward symbol used during the Eucharistic Prayer demands the attention of our hearts and minds. Listen carefully today to the words that are spoke to you. Look carefully at the holy ritual enacted before your eyes. Humbly, we are called to stand childlike before the Lord and to find our peace in the One “who comes in the name of the Lord.”

With this childlike approach, we may dispose ourselves better to see the Lord of Hosts who gathers us with the mighty angelic choir to celebrate His victory over sin and death.

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Catechesis # 5

Throughout the Bible, one of the most beautiful images used to describe the relationship between God and His chosen people is marriage. God takes Israel as His Bride. The prophets call upon this image to speak of the Chosen People as “espoused” to God as a faithful and perfect Bride.

When Israel turns away from God in sin, the prophets condemn her of being unfaithful. Even in the Wisdom Literature, the Song of Songs presents the allegory of the intimate relationship between God and His people as the Bridegroom and the Bride in their marital chamber. Therefore, when we hear the Gospel this Sunday, it comes as no surprise that Jesus is the Bridegroom of whom the cry is announced, “Behold, the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him!”

We behold the Bridegroom each time we celebrate Mass. Jesus comes to enter into communion with those who have committed themselves to Him in the bond of Christian love. The Mass calls this bond of commitment the “new and eternal covenant” made in Christ’s blood.

Through the Sacraments of Initiation, each of us in the Church becomes united to Christ in this covenant. This covenant is strengthened and renewed every time we participate in the Sacraments.

This is the same language we use to describe the relationship between a husband and a wife. Except, in this case, the bridegroom is Jesus and the bride is the Church. Remember how Saint Paul describes this great mystery: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her.” Saint Paul goes on with this image, “Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.”

In the Eucharistic Prayer, we recount those beautiful words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper: “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you.” The love of Christ is consummated in the handing over of His body for the sake of “the many” who share in His eternal covenant.

These words of consecration are spoken at each Mass and should grasp our attention with the same cry echoed in the Gospel, “Behold, the Bridegroom!” As we receive the true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, we are drawn into the Sacramental Communion that makes us “one spirit, one body in Christ.”

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Catechesis # 6

Saint Teresa of Avila, a spiritual doctor of the Church, reflected one day, “I think that if I had understood then as I do now that this great King really dwells within a little palace of my soul, I should not have left Him alone so often and never allowed his dwelling place to get so dirty.”

This great saint of the Church recalls for us something very profound that is repeated each time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist: Christ comes to dwell within our souls! At the proclamation, “Behold the Lamb of God,” the revised translation of Mass has us responding, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” This direct allusion to Saint Luke’s Gospel is echoed throughout the spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church.

From Saint Paul to Saint Teresa, down to the spiritual authors of our time, there is no richer spiritual insight than to know that the Triune God comes to dwell in our hearts. Jesus himself says, “Remain in me as I remain in you.” In order for us to bear fruitful lives, Jesus comes to make His home in us.

We may ask how we merit such a wonderful gift. Our worthiness is not made of anything we do, but from the healing word of Christ that purifies and washes us clean. For this reason, we call upon the Lord to “only say the word” that will heal our souls.

Like Saint Teresa, we are not always fully aware that the “Great King” really dwells within us, so we may neglect Him or even allow our souls to become dirty with sin. Each participation in Mass reminds us to recommit ourselves to preparing a worthy dwelling place for the Lord. Each participation in Mass recalls us to be attentive to the abiding presence of the Lord. Today, as we celebrate Mass, we are encouraged to be particularly aware of this great spiritual truth: Christ comes to make His dwelling “under our roof!”