

ST. ANDREW'S LEAFLETS

No. 16

***PRAYING THE MASS***

*by Fr. Richard Oakley*



At the entrance to this and many Churches there is a notice which reads:

*Silence Please...  
Talk to God before Mass  
And to each other after Mass*

We must learn to approach God prayerfully and that requires quiet preparation before Mass and re-collection during Mass.

This booklet is an aid to your preparation at home and before Mass begins. It may also help to centre your whole self upon God during Mass.

## **USING THE SILENCE**

It is very easy to lose that sense of devotion by a lack of stillness and quiet both before and during Mass. How easy it is to indulge in idle chatter or to create a disturbance by doing a whole range of jobs which could be done at a more appropriate time! Even the way we move about the Church can create unnecessary noise. The greatest disturbance of the peace can come from showing visible disapproval of what others are doing. Not only does any of this mean that we are not being prayerful but it destroys the devotion of others.

Here are some helpful hints as to how one can develop one's relationship with God through a more devotional approach to the Mass.

### ***PREPARATION***

One should approach Mass with proper preparation. This will mean a time of prayer at home – perhaps on a Saturday evening. Arrive at Mass in good time. It is bad manners to arrive in a rush at the last moment or late. It is rude both to God and to my fellow worshippers.

Whatever duties one may have during the Mass You need to arrive in good time so that you can have a time of prayer before Mass begins.

### ***LIGHTING A CANDLE***

You can begin your preparation for Mass by lighting a candle. This reminds you that you are part of a Church far bigger than you can see; most of which is in heaven. You are 'surrounded by a cloud of unseen witnesses' – the saints who support me with their prayers.

### ***FOR WHOM HAVE I COME?***

You have come to worship God and to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. How easy it is to take his love for granted. Focus your attention and love on Him. Picture the cross or look at something in Church which reminds me how much God has done for love of me, or repeat well known words from scripture or prayers and hymns which express my desire for God.

## **READING GOD'S WORD**

If you have a missal, look at the Mass reading as a preparation for the Ministry of the Word. Copies are available at the back of the church, or speak to a priest about buying a copy.

## **CONFESSION**

As the start of Mass you will confess your sins. All too often we can say the words without any thought of what one is confessing. In the light of God's love examine yourself so that you might truly know for what you have to say sorry. Each day have a space to look back over the previous twenty four hours to see where you have sinned in thought, word and deed. But remember that there is no substitute for sacramental confession to a priest.

## **MY INTENTION**

During the Mass comes the Prayer of the Faithful when we are invited to pray for the needs of the Church and the world.

Petitions are then offered on our behalf, by the intercessor to which we all respond. One must go to Mass with one's own petition – your own intention for that Mass. What is the particular person, situation, need that I am carrying in my heart to add silently to the prayer of the whole Church? It may be that the candle you lit before Mass was for that particular intention and a part of your preparation is to decide what that intention is to be. In a more general way your regular intercessory prayer will be focused in the Prayer of the Faithful and you will bring your own prayers to add to those for the Church, the world, the sick and the departed.

## ***PRAYING THE MASS:***

### **THE OFFERTORY**

The Offertory should be more than a break in the Mass during which the altar is prepared, an opportunity to take the collection as the congregation sing a hymn to fill the gap. The priest receives the gifts of bread and wine which are usually brought up by representatives of the congregation. As they are laid upon the altar we should each be offering the gift of our whole lives with them. *Here Lord is my life, all that I am; all that you have given to me. The gifts I know that I have and those that I have yet to discover.*

*The good that is in my life but also the darker side; the failures, the sinfulness, the pains and sorrows. The things I do day by day and all the people who are a part of my life. In fact all that makes me, me. All this I lay on the altar with the bread and wine. What I offer will be given back, but what I get back will be more than I gave for my gift will be transformed. When I make my communion it is Jesus Christ that I receive and it is the gift of his very self that I receive into that life which I offered.*

### **THANKSGIVING**

At the centre of the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer. It is a prayer of thanksgiving (Eucharist means thanksgiving) when we thank and praise God for all the great things he has done and continues to do. As the priest re-enacts the words and actions of Our Lord at the Last Supper he reminds us that as Jesus took the bread and again as he took the cup *‘He gave you thanks and praise’*. There is much for which to give thanks in life but how seldom do we say ‘thank you’ to God. As the priest says the Prayer of Thanksgiving you too must be giving thanks. This too must be a part of your preparation and in that daily looking back over the previous twenty four hours I will find, even in the darkest times, so much for which to say ‘thank you’ to God.

### **COMMUNION**

As you come to make your Communion be aware of what you are about to do. It is so very easy to receive Holy Communion with little or no thought for the One who is giving his very self to me. As you wait to receive the Body and Blood of Christ it is easy to throw away those precious moments by wandering thoughts or, worse, chattering to others.

If a hymn is being sung as you wait, the words might focus my attention or I might repeat silently a phrase like *‘My Lord and my God’*; or the response to the Words of Invitation *‘Lord I am not worthy.....’*

### **AFTER COMMUNION**

The moments after Communion, when you have returned to your place, can be the most precious of all. You have been fed by Christ himself and need to rest in his love. Here is the place for Adoration (telling God that I love him), praise and thanksgiving. You may find that this is not the time for too many words but simply to let myself be with God.

## **NOW TALK TO EACH OTHER!**

Are you one of those who dashes out as soon as Mass ends and then complains that nobody speaks to you? Our fellowship with each other is an essential part of Church life. But there is a great danger of talking only to those we know, of being so busy organising Church affairs, that we fail to be welcoming and friendly. Be aware of the stranger or the person standing alone – and offer them a word of greeting!

## **FASTING**

This is one part of our preparation for Mass that is not today given the emphasis that it should have. As you are to be given the most vital food of all in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar you should abstain from other food for at least one hour before Mass. Only medical necessity should change this.



If each one of us took our preparation for Mass more seriously, and if we were more devout during Mass, we would find that our particular Church had become a much more prayerful place. Not only would this deepen our own relationship with God but it would also draw others to him.

We would find that, being more focused on God, we were much less likely to be distracted by the noise of others and would be less of a distraction myself. The Children and young people in our congregation would then have an example of quietness and devotion to copy and an atmosphere of prayer in which to grow in the Christian life.



## **PRAYERS BEFORE RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION:**

Almighty and ever-living God,  
I approach the sacrament of Your only-begotten Son  
Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
I come sick to the doctor of life, unclean to the fountain of mercy,  
blind to the radiance of eternal light,  
and poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth.  
Lord, in your great generosity, heal my sickness,  
wash away my defilement, enlighten my blindness,  
enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness.  
May I receive the bread of angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords,  
with humble reverence, with the purity and faith,  
the repentance and love  
and the determined purpose that will help to bring me to salvation.  
May I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood,  
and its reality and power.  
Kind God, may I receive the Body  
of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
born from the womb of the Virgin Mary,  
and so be received into His mystical body  
and numbered among His members.  
Loving Father,  
as on my earthly pilgrimage I now receive Your beloved Son  
under the veil of a sacrament, may I one day see him face to face in glory,  
who lives and reigns with You for ever. Amen.

*St. Thomas Aquinas*

I place myself in the presence of Him, in whose Incarnate Presence I am before. I place myself there. I adore Thee, O my Saviour, present here as God and man, in soul and body, in true flesh and blood. I acknowledge and confess that I kneel before that Sacred Humanity, which was conceived in Mary's womb and lay in Mary's bosom; which grew up to man's estate, and by the Sea of Galilee called the Twelve, wrought miracles and spoke words of wisdom and peace; which in due season hung on the cross, lay in the tomb, rose from the dead, and now reigns in heaven.

I praise, and bless, and give myself wholly to Him, Who is the true Bread of my soul, and my everlasting joy. *Amen*

*John Henry, Cardinal Newman*

FATHER in heaven, you have made us for yourself;  
our hearts are restless until they rest in you.  
Fulfil this longing through Jesus, the bread of life,  
so that we may witness to him  
who alone satisfies the hungers of the human family.  
By the power of your Spirit  
lead us to the heavenly table where we may feast  
on the vision of your glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

AT your mystical Supper  
accept me, today, Son of God, as a communicant.  
For I will not tell of the mystery to your enemies,  
nor will I give you a kiss like Judas.  
But like the thief, I acknowledge you:  
Remember me, Lord, when you come into your Kingdom. *Amen.*

*An Orthodox Prayer*

I BELIEVE, O Lord, and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ,  
the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners,  
of whom I am the chief.  
And I believe that this is Thy pure Body and Thy own precious Blood.  
Therefore, I pray Thee, have mercy on me and forgive my transgressions,  
voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, known and unknown.  
And grant that I may partake of Thy Holy Mysteries without condemnation,  
for the remission of sins and for life eternal. *Amen.*

*St. John Chrysostom*

## PRAYERS AFTER RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION:

### *The Anima Christi*

SOUL of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesu, hear me.  
Within your wounds hide me.  
Suffer me not to be separated from you.  
From the power of darkness defend me.  
In the hour of my death, call me  
and bid me come to you,  
that with your saints I may praise you  
for ever and ever. Amen.

HERE, O my Lord, I see thee face to face;  
Here faith would touch  
and handle things unseen;  
Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,  
and all my weariness upon thee lean.  
*H. Bonar 1808-89*

### *A Prayer of St. Basil the Great*

LORD Christ our God, King of the ages and Creator of all,  
I thank Thee for all the blessings Thou hast granted me  
and for the communion of Thy pure and life-giving Mysteries.  
I pray Thee, therefore, gracious Lord and Lover of mankind,  
guard me under Thy protection and within the shadow of Thy wings;  
and grant me with a clear conscience till my last breath  
worthily to partake of Thy sacred Gifts for forgiveness of sins  
and for life eternal. For Thou art the Bread of Life, the Source of Holiness,  
the Giver of all that is good, and to Thee we send up glory,  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.  
Amen.