

Mass Etiquette: 20 Things To Do And Not Do In Mass

- 1. Fast before Mass.** It is Church law that one fasts for at least 1 hour before receiving Holy Communion. Water and medicine can be consumed, of course. The purpose is to help us prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
- 2. No Food and Drink in Church.** The exceptions would be a drink for small children, water for the priest or choir (if discreet) and water for those who are ill. Bringing a snack into church is not appropriate, because we want to set the church apart as a place of prayer and reflection.
- 3. Men take your hats off.** It is impolite to wear a hat into a church for a man. While this is a cultural norm, it is one that we ought to follow closely. Just as we take off hats for the Pledge of Allegiance, we do so in church too; as a sign of respect.
- 4. Don't chew gum in church.** It breaks your fast, it's distracting, it is consider impolite in a formal setting, and it doesn't help us pray better. Can you imagine the Pope popping gum in during Mass?
- 5. Cross yourself with Holy Water on entering and leaving the church.** This is a reminder of our Baptism, which made us members of Christ's Church. Just try to remain mindful of what is happening when you do so and don't do it without saying a prayer.
- 6. Dress modestly and appropriately.** Wear your Sunday Best. As Catholics we believe that God comes down to meet us at every Mass. So, why would we not dress up?
- 7. Show up at least a few minutes early.** If for some reason you can't be on time, then try to sit in the back so you don't disturb others. Getting to Mass early allows you to pray and prepare yourself better for Mass.
- 8. Cell phones should never be used in Mass for calls or texting.** The exceptions are emergencies (big ones, not everyday ones) and if you do use one, please walk out of church to do so. Also, if you are using the phone for readings or prayers, this is appropriate, but try to be discreet.
- 9. Don't sit on the edge of the pew if you sit down before others.** Rather, sit in the middle so others don't have to climb over you. Furthermore - Gentlemen offer their seats to a any lady (elderly, disabled, etc) who must stand. Some churches, like ours, get packed. We live in Texas (Howdy!). In Texas men don't sit when a woman is standing.
- 10. When we enter and leave Church, genuflect toward the Tabernacle.** Christ is present for our sake. By allowing our right knee to hit the floor, we acknowledge He is our Lord and God. If someone is physically unable to genuflect, then a bow is sufficient. During Mass, if you pass in front of the altar or tabernacle, bow reverently.
- 11. Please be quiet while in church.** Once you enter the sanctuary - it is not the time or place to visit with those around you. If you must talk do so as quietly and briefly as possible. Remember that your conversation might be disturbing someone who is in prayer, which is much more important. Sssshhhhhhh.
- 12. Take loud children to the back.** Every parent knows that sometimes the baby is going to have a bad day. Don't make everyone else's day bad as well. Sit on the end of a

pew, if you can, and take the kid to the back quickly. Don't wait too long before you make a move. There is no reason to be embarrassed about having to quiet your child in the back of the church. It is worse to allow them to disturb Mass continually.

13. **Prepare your offering before Mass.** Christ tells us not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing when you make your offering. Keeping the basket while you get your wallet out can sometimes become quite a scene. For [tips on tithing, check this out.](#)

14. **No bulletin reading during Mass.** Imagine if you invited a guest to your house and before dinner (or during) they decided to read a magazine instead of talking to you. That is what is happening in God's house when you read the bulletin.

15. **Respect Boundaries others may have.** You might want to [hold hands to pray](#), they may not. They might be sick and not want to shake during the sign of peace. These are all OK. Do not make any unnecessary judgment because they worship differently.

16. **Bow before receiving Holy Communion.** If it is God, then show your respect with a [bow of the head](#). This is an ancient practice that has continued until this day.

17. **Do not receive from the chalice if you are sick.** This is an [act of charity](#) and it is not necessary to receive in order to receive the entirety of Jesus' body, blood, soul, and divinity.

18. **Do not leave early.** We should stay to the end of the recession and the hymn that accompanies it, if there is one. While there are certainly exceptions to this guideline, most who leave early don't need to and ought not to.

19. **Pray after Mass, if you feel called to do so.** It is a good custom, though not required, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving after Mass is over.

20. **Leave quietly.** We encourage you to visit with others, but once you are outside of the main sanctuary of the church so you won't disturb others who want to stay and pray. So, please leave quietly and then have then visit afterward.

<https://www.aggiecatholic.org/blog/2014/09/mass-etiquette-20-things-to-do-and-not-do-in-mass>

15 Things That Need to Stop Happening During Mass

- 1) Clapping During Mass
- 2) Too many extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist
- 3) Receiving from the cup when you are sick
- 4) Wandering around during sign of peace, peace sign during sign of peace
- 5) Excessive socializing before Mass
- 6) Not fasting before Mass
- 7) Keeping your phone ringer on when you go to Mass
- 8) Not donating
- 9) Leaving early from Mass
- 10) Bad preaching during homilies
- 11) Receiving Communion in the state of mortal sin

- 12) Dressing improperly
- 13) Not ringing the bells during the consecration
- 14) Genuflecting towards the altar when the tabernacle is located elsewhere
- 15) Holding hands during the Our Father [Church POP]

<http://nhknight.org/index.php/en/state-council/632-20-things-you-might-be-doing-wrong-at-mass>

1. Changing posture early

Seriously, what's the deal? Why can't we just wait 'til we actually finish the Sanctus before kneeling? Do you love kneeling that much? Do you think being the first person to sit will get you a prize? "Hey Bill, what's that medal for?" "Well, I sat the fastest after the collect at a mass back in '85" Yeah, not gonna happen. Let's make a point to do things together next time. Cool? Cool.

2. Leaving before the Mass is over

AKA the "Judas Shuffle". I'm sorry, did you think Mass was over as soon as you received the Eucharist? It's as though some people think the proper response when receiving Holy Communion isn't "Amen", but "Goodbye". We should observe proper decorum for Mass: depart after the celebrant.

3. Genuflecting toward the altar

I see this constantly! Genuflecting is the most pronounced gesture we employ at Mass, so it is reserved for the highest good — the Eucharist Himself. Where's the Eucharist? In the Tabernacle. Some might be in this habit because the tabernacle is often directly behind the altar. Before getting in your pew, if and only IF the Tabernacle is visible, genuflect toward it. If it's not in view, bow toward the altar. Now you know. And this applies outside of Mass too.

Speaking of bowing...

4. Nodding your head instead of a proper bow

Wherever bowing is called for in the Mass (when the congregation is incensed by the thurifer, in the middle of the Creed, etc.) it is always a "profound bow", which just means that you bow from the waist. The only time that we are told to bow our head only is "when the three Divine Persons are named together, and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated".

5. Standing in the Orans position during the Our Father

No. Just no. You'll see priests assume the Orans position (hands extended to the side) a few times; it is a posture that is reserved for him. It indicates that he is praying on our behalf, but not in the way that I pray for you. He's praying on our behalf in persona Christi capitis. This is why the rubrics don't allow for deacons to adopt the Orans posture, and it's the main reason we shouldn't either.

6. Walking around at the Sign of Peace

What is this, social hour? Not only is this obnoxious (my opinion), but it's illicit. The rubrics tell us that it is "appropriate that each person offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner". We all love you, but stay where you are.

7. Not saying "Amen" before receiving Communion

I can hardly believe this needs to be said, but it does. When the priest, deacon, or EMHC elevates the host or chalice and says, "The Body/Blood of Christ", you had better not be silent. It is imperative that those who receive can affirm belief in the Real Presence, so do what the Church asks. Say "Amen". Amen? Amen!

8. Not singing

Admittedly, this might not be crucial, but neither the congregation nor the choir is singing for your amusement. Hymns, which are representative of the antiphons, are a response of the faithful as part of the Mass; making them a part of the prescribed "full, conscious, and active" participation in the Mass. Don't fall prey to individualistic tendencies. We worship together, and that means singing together. Sacrosanctum Concilium on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council says, "Religious singing by the people is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises, as also during liturgical services, the voices of the faithful may ring out..." (118) RING. OUT. Skill is not a prerequisite. Just, please, sing to the Lord.

9. Not saying the responses

Now, this one is more important than carrying a tune. How does somebody think that active participation in the liturgy is going to be accomplished without actively participating in the liturgy. Yes, it is primarily about interior disposition, but habitually refraining from the responses is a pretty solid sign of a poor disposition. Again, we worship together.

10. Arriving late

I know what the problem is, somebody told you that if you arrived by X and left after X, then you “officially” went to Mass and fulfilled your obligation. Sed contra, my friend! There are no such limits. Our obligation is to attend a Sunday Mass, and that Mass begins and ends with the introductory rites and the concluding rites. If you happen to be late because of circumstances beyond your control, if you made an honest effort to be there on time, but you walked in at the Psalm, so be it; you’re fine. But if you had to catch the last 7 minutes of a game, and that’s why you’re late, then stop reading this and re-prioritize. (Confession might even be required.)

11. Standing up to process to receive Communion when you won’t be able to leave your pew for another 2 minutes

I don’t get it. Why do you do this? This is when we kneel in reverence; the standing and walking is strictly out of necessity. The procession should be sober. It shouldn’t look like a rush to reserve your spot in line. Hey, if you’re excited to receive the Lord, great, but how about some order and patience in the ranks, huh? Additional time in prayer wouldn’t hurt either.

12. Sitting down just because the priest sat down after Communion

Maybe you should be sitting down when the priest sits, but his sitting is not the reason for your sitting. The priest can sit whenever he wants (almost), but we don’t take cues from him. Nobody should sit until the Host has been returned to the tabernacle. If the tabernacle is not in view, then everyone ought to be waiting until the ciborium has left the sanctuary.

13. Saying the words of consecration (“This is my body...”)

Who are you? Because if you’re not a priest concelebrating the Mass, zip it, friend! At best, this is inappropriate and mildly scandalous; at worst, it could constitute simulation of a sacrament — obviously a very grave offense. The ministerial priesthood is absolutely distinct from the baptismal priesthood, and the laity have no business trying to blur the lines.

14. Not bowing before receiving Communion

Oh, you genuflect before receiving? That’s cool (no matter who might tell you otherwise). But nodding your head or, worse, doing nothing as you approach the Great High Priest, King of Kings, and Savior of All Mankind is, quite frankly, pretty messed up. Really, we can do better than that. Bow from the waist, and do it like you mean it. That is Jesus, Second Person of the Trinity, Christ before your eyes, show some respect.

15. Reaching for the host or the chalice

Do you also sometimes talk about “taking Communion”? Yeah, no, not cool. Respect begins with the bow and continues with behavior that reflects your understanding that you are on the receiving end of this relationship. We take nothing from God, but we always receive from his benevolence. Believe me, if the priest had a third hand, he’d be using it to smack your grabby little paws away.

16. Receiving on the hand

I’m kidding! I’m kidding! No, the real offense would be to sneer at those who receive on the hand. The Church has told us that the preferred method is receiving on the tongue but both are perfectly licit, dignified options. So, respect people regardless of how they receive; in that way you respect the Church.

17. Sneering at noisy children (or their parents)

My kids are noisy sometimes; it’s true. They’re all 4yo and under; I’d probably be concerned if they sat still and quiet for an hour. Given that kids are equal to adults, having every right (from baptism) to be present for the Mass, and given that folks who don’t have the responsibility of wrangling children during Mass and training them to be quiet are not so deserving of sympathy as the parents who do, might I suggest that you thank God for the little buggers and parents who actually care to train them in the faith.

18. Sitting all the way in back

Is there something I don’t know? Do I need an escape route planned? Please, move forward; join the community...unless, of course, you’re incredibly contagious. But why habitually sit 80 feet away from the nearest person? This is the Church, the One Body of Christ, let’s act like it.

19. Holding hands at the Our Father

First off, this looks like it was born out of necessity by people standing next to one another in the Orans position (see #4), right? The people at the end of the chain have their un-held hand raised, do they not? Expecting or obliging the whole community to join hands is unacceptable because it has not been approved, but even small groups doing it is problematic and dissonant. It also emphasizes a horizontal perspective at a moment when we ought to be focused on the vertical. And it distracts from the true act of union, the reception of Holy Communion.

20. Relying on everyone else to know when to sit or stand

How long have you been Catholic? Neophytes are given a pass, but we should all know the moves by now. An uber-brief primer: Stand to pray, because that’s the posture of prayer from Temple worship. Kneel before the Eucharistic prayers and while waiting to receive Communion.