



THE MASS

I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Entrance
- Veneration of the Altar
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite
- "Lord, Have Mercy"
- "Glory to God in the Highest"
- Opening Prayer

II. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS<

- Homily
- Profession of Faith
- Prayers of the Faithful

III. THE LITURGY OF THE

EUCCHARIST

- Preparation of the Gifts
- Prayer Over the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
 1. Preface
 2. Acclamation Sanctus
 3. Epiclesis
 4. Consecration
 5. The Mystery of Faith
 6. Anamnesis
 7. Offering
 8. Intercessions
 9. Final Doxology & Amen
- Communion Rite
 1. Lord's Prayer
 2. Rite of Peace
 3. Breaking of Bread
 4. Communion
 5. Prayer After Communion

IV. CONCLUDING RITES

- Announcements
- Blessing
- Dismissal
- Veneration of the Altar
- Personal Thanksgiving

The Proclamation of the Gospel

If the Book of the Gospels is on the altar, the priest (or deacon) takes it and goes to the lectern. When he reaches the ambo, he opens the book and says,

The Lord be with you.

Then he introduces:

A reading from the holy gospel according to . . .

The people respond,

Glory to you, Lord.

He makes the sign of the cross with his thumb on the book and on his forehead, lips and heart.

You have probably heard of all the care which, in the centuries before the advent of printing, the Church gave to the calligraphy of Gospel Books, their pages being ornamented with illuminations and their bindings at times encrusted with gold, ivory, and precious stones. The scent of incense used to fill the whole church, and candles were lit "as when," wrote St. Jerome, "the sun shines with all its brilliance; but their flame is not intended to dispel darkness, it is a sign of joy."

We understand why the reading of the Gospel should be done with veneration. Ever since the Gospel was first read in Christian churches, the faithful have never listened to it in any other way than standing. In the Middle Ages, even those leaning on staves would leave them on the ground, standing erect as a servant stands before his lord. The bishop would hold his crozier in hand, and knights would draw their swords from their sheaths, removing also their cloaks and gloves. Men would remove their headgear, and princes their crowns.

Throughout the ages, all present made the sign of the cross together with the priest. Many times during the day, the first Christians did it with one finger on the forehead. As Tertullian wrote:

Whenever they enter or leave the house, when dressing, when bathing, when about to eat, when lighting the lamps, when going to bed, on rising, on all occasions, they trace the sign of the cross on their foreheads.

These are signs of special veneration: on the part of the priest or deacon, the blessing and the preparatory prayer, as well as the kiss with which he concludes the reading; on the part of the faithful, their standing up and the acclamations with which they acknowledge the presence of Christ, speaking through these readings.

THE END OF THE READING

When the priest has finished the reading, he says,

The gospel of the Lord.

We unanimously answer,

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

With this, we make a firm resolution to apply to our lives the teachings we have just received, giving to Christ our entire lives--lest he tell us, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" (Lk 6:46).

Until the thirteenth century, the Book of the Gospels was brought to be kissed by the clergy and even by the faithful. Today, only the priest who has just read the Gospel kisses it.

We can at least make ours the kiss the priest has placed on the sacred book. With it, we want to tell our Lord we are ready to give our lives for the truths contained in the Gospel. At the same time, we ask forgiveness for our faults, interiorly accompanying the celebrant who, while kissing the book, says,

May the words of the gospel wipe away our sins.