

## Intro to the Mass

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Four years ago I did a 4-part series I called *A Journey Through the Mass*. Over the course of the next five weeks, I will again be talking about the Mass but this time at greater length; I'll use both the bulletin and my homilies. This week I'll focus on an introduction to the Mass and then follow up with the four primary segments of the Mass itself.

Before I get into some information about clothes and colors, let's first consider why we even go to church. What's wrong with worshipping God using my own words? Well, as Mike Aquilina suggests, while using our own words may seem good, we need more. At the Last Supper, Jesus told us to repeat the breaking of the bread but is His saying that the answer? After all, Jesus did nothing without a reason.

Rituals like the Mass keep us on track. We have lots of rituals in our lives: our morning routine as we get ready for our day; how, what and when we eat; how we get to work and so on. And some of our rituals convey a message to others. But how does this relate to the ritual of the Mass?

A number of years ago, America Magazine ran an article entitled *Why Go To Mass?* Here are some excerpts. When we go to Mass, we are participating in the salvation of the world and in doing that, we commit to working for God's reign. We experience the glory of God as we realize we are part of the Body of Christ. We hear the Scriptures communally and in so doing, we deepen and safeguard our experience of God communicating with us.

When we celebrate faithfully, we conform ourselves more and more to the image of generosity and love of the One into whom we are baptized. We find companionship in the sharing of the Eucharist. We bring our needs and desires to the Lord's Table. And on a broader scale, we pray for the needs of the world. When we are conscious of those needs, we are again reminded we are part of the Body of Christ outside our own community of faith.

On to clothes and colors. So, what do we call the clothes I wear? Well, first I put on an Alb, a long white tunic that sometimes includes embroidery or lace. Deacon John also wears an Alb; in fact, anyone who is visibly ministering at Mass may wear an alb, just as our servers do.

Over the Alb is the chasuble, the outer garment that identifies the priest presiding at Mass. When there are multiple priests, called con-celebrants, at a liturgy, the other priests might also wear chasubles, though a stole is all that's required. The color depends on the type of Mass being celebrated – I'll get into the colors in a minute.

The other part of the attire is a stole, a long scarf-like garment, which typically matches the chasuble. Again, it is in the color of the day. Deacons most often wear just a stole over their Alb, but on special solemnities, the deacon may wear an outer garment, called a dalmatic. You'll usually see John in a dalmatic on Christmas and Easter and at other important liturgies.

Why do I wear the vestments? Well, just like a police officer wears a badge, the vestments tell you who I am and what I am doing. Some of the vestments are very elaborate, depending on the liturgy being celebrated, where it is being celebrated or the tradition of a particular parish.

And what do the various colors mean? Well, every day in the Church calendar is assigned a particular color and the vestments, and often the environment, will usually be in that color. White is used for Christmas, Easter, Marian feasts, other solemnities and funerals. Red is used on Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost and feasts of martyrs. Purple is used for Lent and Advent, though in Advent the Church allows a blueish hue to the purple. Rose is used for Gaudete and Laetere Sundays, days of joy in the midst of the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. During Ordinary Time, when there is no other particular celebration, the color worn is green.

In conclusion, by sharing in the Eucharist, we anticipate the eternal banquet waiting for us in heaven. Our celebrations on earth are but a glimpse of what we'll participate in for eternity; at Mass God invites us to share in the deepest peace and joy possible – sharing in His very body and blood. Because, the ultimate joy for us while on this earth is to share the Body and Blood of Jesus as a community.