

The Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does.

At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

What the Church says about

The Assembly

At Mass — that is, the Lord’s Supper — the People of God is called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For this reason Christ’s promise applies in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst’ (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal
(GIRM) 27

The celebration of Mass is the action of Christ and the Church, which is “the Sacrament of unity”, namely the holy people of God united and ordered under the Bishop. It is the action in which the Christian people, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart’, expresses its unity and its nature. It is the action of the whole people of God, ministers and congregation, united with Christ, who is head of the Body.

- Within the one body of Christ there are many gifts and responsibilities. But just as each organ and limb is necessary for the sound functioning of the body (see 1 Corinthians 12), so every member of the assembly has a part to play in the action of the whole.

Celebrating the Mass (CTM) 21

At Mass “the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavour to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.”

The liturgical assembly is never a random group of individuals but the gathering of God’s people to exercise its royal priesthood in the sacrifice of praise. Everything in the celebration is organised to encourage and foster an awareness of this assembly’s common dignity and purpose, mutual interdependence, and connectedness with the wider Church.

CTM 22, 23

Preparing for Mass

In preparing for taking your part in the celebration of Sunday Mass call to mind that in the celebration of the Eucharist the assembly is asked to be united in and by

- the principal actions of gathering,
- listening to God's word,
- praying for life of the Church and the world,
- giving thanks,
- sharing communion
- and being sent out for the work of loving and serving God.

CTM 24

Pray for yourself and the others in your parish that you may indeed be united in these things.



*They told their story
of what had happened on the road
and how they had recognised him
at the breaking of the bread.*

LUKE 24:35



God our Father,
in all the churches scattered
throughout the world
you show forth the one, holy, catholic
and apostolic Church.

Through the gospel and the eucharist
bring your people together
in the Holy Spirit
and guide us in your love.

Make us a sign of your love for all people,
and help us to show forth
the living presence of Christ in the world,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

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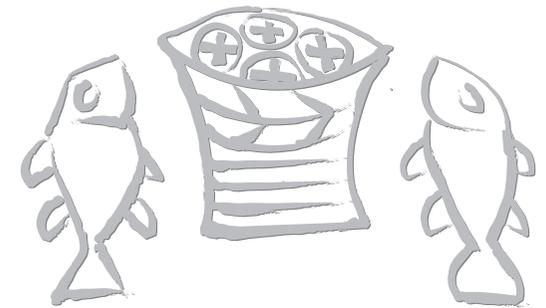
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The Assembly and their ministry at Mass



*A people growing together...
holy by their origin,
but becoming ever more holy
by conscious, active,
and fruitful participation
in the mystery of the Eucharist.*

GIRM 5