

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

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.

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.

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.

Don't chew gum in church. It breaks your fast, it's distracting, it is considered impolite in a formal setting, and it doesn't help us pray better.

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.

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?

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.

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.

Don't sit on the end 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 any lady (elderly, disabled, etc.) who must stand. Some churches, like ours, get packed. Here in the South, men don't sit when a woman is standing.

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.

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.

Take loud children to the back or cry (training) room. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Do not receive from the chalice if you are sick. This is an act of charity and it is not necessary to receive both species in order to receive the entirety of Jesus' body, blood, soul, and divinity.

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.

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

Leave quietly. We encourage you to visit with others, but only 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 the visit afterward.