

A SHORT GUIDE TO THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM MASS

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish

On Saturday, March 25, 2017, Father Albert Laforet will celebrate Mass in Extraordinary Form (sometimes called the Traditional Latin Mass). If you have never attended this form of Mass (or have not done so in a long time), this abbreviated guide should help you to know what to expect. Let's start with three differences you might notice between the "Ordinary Form" of the Mass with which most of us are most familiar, and the older, "Extraordinary Form" of the Mass we will celebrate on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord:

Language

In the Extraordinary Form, the priest prays most of the Mass in Latin (which is still the official language of the Roman Catholic Church). A booklet missal will be provided that contains the prayers of the Mass in both Latin (on one page) and English (on the facing page) to assist you as you pray the Mass. In addition, there will be a worship aid with the changeable parts of the Mass for that particular day, including the Scripture readings of the day and the Proper prayers (i.e. the prayers specific to that particular day) of the Mass. The priest will always preach the homily in English.

Direction of Prayer

The priest faces the tabernacle and the altar (symbolizing the "liturgical east," in watchfulness of Christ's return) as he prays during the Mass. The reason for this bears a quick explanation. In facing the "liturgical east," the priest leads the congregation in prayer and, **together**, he and the congregation face the Lord in worship. This is known as celebrating Mass *ad Deum* (Latin for "towards God") or *ad orientem* ("towards east"), and it is not only an ancient tradition, but it is even the direction of prayer presumed by the rubrics of our current *Roman Missal*.

Periods of Silence

Silence allows us to pray and to reflect upon our relationship with God. It also allows us to listen as He speaks to us. People are quiet as they enter and leave the church before and after Mass, to show reverence for the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle and out of respect to others who are praying. There are also periods of silence during the Canon of the Mass (i.e. the Eucharistic Prayer) while the priest prays very quietly at the altar.

WHAT TO DO

Standing, Kneeling, Sitting

The booklet missal and worship guide that will be available will make it possible for you to follow along with the text of most of the Mass. If you are unsure when to stand, kneel, or sit, simply follow the instructions in the booklet missal. When all else fails, simply follow those around you and don't worry – most people attending this Mass are in the same boat you're in and no one is judging!

Responses and Participation

The most important form of participation for the congregation is *interior* participation – paying attention to the Mass while lifting our hearts and mind in silent prayer and uniting them to the prayers of the priest. However, if you are familiar with the pronunciation of Latin and want to join in on making certain responses, you may certainly do so wherever indicated in the booklet missal.

Holy Communion

In the Extraordinary Form, those who are receiving Holy Communion normally do so on the tongue, while kneeling at an altar rail. This posture symbolizes the upmost respect for our Lord in the Eucharist. As St. Thomas Aquinas Church does not have an altar rail, we will use the first pews on the center, left, and right front for distribution of Holy Communion. Those who are unable to kneel due to medical condition or age are certainly not required to do so, however all who are receiving Holy Communion do so on the tongue, not in the hands. Also in Extraordinary Form of the Mass, the person receiving Communion does not respond "Amen" or make any response to the priest when receiving the Eucharist.

As in the newer form of the Mass, a person who wishes to receive Holy Communion must be a baptized Catholic who is not "conscious of grave sin" and who "should have fasted for one hour" before receiving Communion. "A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession..." ("Guidelines for the Reception of Communion," USCCB)

WHAT TO WEAR

We ask men and women to dress as they should for any Mass: with modesty and in a manner that is fitting to the occasion and that honors the real presence of Jesus Christ.

While it is not required, some women choose to wear a head covering or chapel veil during Mass. Doing so is a traditional and personal sign of humility and purity in prayer but it is, again, a completely optional devotion.