

**Worksheet 14**  
**The Mass – “The What And The Why”**  
Reading and Worksheet

**The Mass Is an Encounter with Jesus Christ**

**Mass is a living encounter with Christ and is not merely something we do for God, but something God does for us.** Christianity is not only a set of beliefs, moral teachings, or religious customs. Christianity is first a relationship with the living Lord and the Mass is the Church’s most complete and sacramental expression of that relationship. It is the place where the risen Christ meets his people in a unique and transforming way. **At Mass, Christ is present to his people. He is present in the assembly gathered in his name, in the ordained minister, in the proclamation of Scripture, and above all in the Eucharist.**

- Key Point: The Mass is not primarily about our thoughts or feelings. It is about Christ acting through his Church and drawing us into communion with him.

**The Mass Has Two Main Parts: Word and Eucharist**

The Liturgy of the Word

**In the first major part of the Mass, God speaks to his people through Sacred Scripture.** The readings are not merely reminders of past events. They are the living Word of God proclaimed in the midst of the Church. Christ himself speaks when the Scriptures are read in the liturgy. **The homily** helps open the meaning of the readings and connect them to Christian life. **The Creed** and the **Prayer of the Faithful** are the people’s response to what God has spoken.

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

**In the Liturgy of the Eucharist bread and wine is offered, and through the power of the Holy Spirit become the Body and Blood of the Lord.** This is the sacrificial and sacramental heart of the Mass. In Holy Communion, the faithful do not merely remember Jesus. They receive him. The Eucharist brings the faithful into intimate communion with Christ and with one another.

- Key Point: In the Mass, Christ first speaks to his people and then feeds his people.

## The Mass Is Sacred Worship, Not Mere Usefulness

**Modern people often judge things by their usefulness.** We ask what something accomplishes, what problem it solves, or what practical benefit it provides. But the Mass cannot be understood only in those terms. The liturgy of the Mass is an act of worship. **Worshipping God at Mass is not “useful” in the ordinary worldly sense. It is an end in-and-of itself because God is worthy of worship.** This is why the Mass includes solemn ritual and ceremonial gestures which enhance worship. This solemn ritual expresses that something different is happening here. The solemn ritual of the Mass teaches us that human life is not fulfilled by work alone. **We were made not only to produce and achieve, but to know, love, and worship God.**

- Key Point: The Mass is not meant to be measured only by efficiency or usefulness. It is sacred worship offered to God because God is worthy of worship.

## The Mass Is a Participation in Heavenly Worship

**The Church also teaches that the liturgy of the Mass on earth is joined to the worship of heaven.** When we gather for Mass, we do not worship alone. We are united with the angels and saints in the eternal praise of God. This is why the Mass includes language of glory,

holiness, sacrifice, and praise. In the Sanctus, the Church joins the song of heaven: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3, RSV-2CE). **Mass is therefore a foretaste of heaven.**

**Heaven is perfect communion with God, the fulfillment of worship, love, joy, and praise.**

- Key Point: The Mass is earthly worship joined to heavenly worship.

### **The Mass Is Sacrifice and Meal**

**The Eucharist is *both* a sacrificial offering and a sacred meal. These two dimensions belong together.** The Mass makes present sacramentally the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross when Jesus offered himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. **That sacrifice is not repeated, but it is “re-presented” in the liturgy so that the Church may participate in it.** At the same time, the Eucharist is a meal. God invites us to his table and in Holy Communion and the faithful are nourished by Christ himself. **This sacrificial meal fulfills the pattern seen throughout salvation history: covenant, sacrifice, and communion.**

- Key Point: The Mass is both the sacramental “re-presentation” of Christ’s sacrifice, and the sacred meal in which we share his life.

### **The Mass Forms Us as the Body of Christ**

**The Mass forms the Church as a people united in Christ. It is not about individual spirituality.**

We come as individuals, but we are gathered into one Body. We listen to the same Word, profess the same faith, offer the same sacrifice, and receive the same Lord. The Eucharist deepens both our union with Christ and our communion with one another. **Even when our emotions are dry or our attention is imperfect, the Mass is still shaping and transforming us.**

- Key Point: The Mass unites us together as a community in worship and transforms us, even when our attention is imperfect.

### **Why the External Elements of Mass Matter**

**Some people wonder why Mass includes so many rituals and ceremonial elements.** They ask why vestments? Why incense? Why kneeling? Why sacred music? Why candles, vessels, and ritual gestures? **These outward signs help reveal the inward mystery.** Human beings are not pure spirits. We know and love through our bodies, our senses, and our symbols. The beauty and solemnity of the Mass are meant to lift our hearts beyond the ordinary and toward the glory of God. **Catholic worship at Mass is sacramental, meaning that God uses visible things to communicate invisible grace.**

- Key Point: External signs in the liturgy help express and deepen worship.

### **Conclusion**

**The Mass is the heart of Catholic life because it is the privileged place where we encounter the risen Lord.** To understand the Mass rightly is to see that it is not simply an obligation, a gathering, or a teaching moment. It is where Catholics meet Jesus Christ in the deepest way. Mass is participation in the saving mystery of Christ. It is worship, sacrifice, communion, and a foretaste of eternal life. **The Mass is the source of the Church's life and is earthly worship joined to heavenly worship.**

### **Worksheet 14 Questions**

If you need help answering the questions you may look at the answer sheet but please put it in your own words, and do not copy word-for-word what is on the Answer Sheet

**What does it mean to say that the Mass is an encounter with Jesus Christ?**

**How is Christ present at Mass?**

**Why is the Mass not mainly about usefulness or efficiency?**

**Why does the Mass include rituals like vestments, incense, kneeling, and sacred music?**

**In what sense is the Mass joined to heavenly worship?**

**How is the Mass both sacrifice and meal?**

**Why is the Mass called the heart of Catholic life?**