

A BIBLICAL GUIDE TO THE MASS

Setting the Stage

From the very beginning of the Mass we hear the bible:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:3, Rom. 1:7)

The Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross, a biblical prayer unto itself.

Who is here because they want to get more out of the Mass? What is another name for the Mass? (Think Eastern)

The **Sacred Liturgy** or **The Divine Liturgy**. What does *liturgy* mean?

The Mass is work, a give and take.

What should we be doing during Mass? Working, in heart, mind and body.

The Mass is a mystery. We innately know that. (e.g., the Latin Mass.)

What we hope to see is that every part of the Mass is a tapestry of the bible. It is the bible that opens the mystery of the Mass and what we are to do.

Pope Benedict held a synod on the Sacred Liturgy which asked the question,

“How do I actively, interiorly participate more at Mass?”

The bishops who participated were unanimous with the answer and called it *Mystagogical Catechesis*.

What does mytagogical mean (Greek)? *Mysterium* – mystery; *agoge* – to lead; “to lead into the mysteries”

Pope Benedict XVI: *Apostolic Exhortation Mystery of Charity*

“The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one's life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world. For this reason, *the Synod of Bishops asked that the faithful be helped to make their interior dispositions correspond to their gestures and words. Otherwise, however carefully planned and executed our liturgies may be, they would risk falling into a certain ritualism.* Hence the need to provide an education in Eucharistic faith capable of enabling the faithful to live personally what they celebrate.”

Ritualism – going through the motions – zone out.

There is often a disconnect between the exterior and the interior, so education is needed.

The *Catechism on Mystagogy*:

(1075) Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is "mystagogy.") by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the "sacraments" to the "mysteries." Such catechesis is to be presented by local and regional catechisms.

Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a *mystagogical approach to catechesis*, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated...This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy which should always respect three elements:

1. It “interprets the rites... with constant reference to *salvation history*.” (the Bible)
2. It is “concerned with presenting *the meaning of the signs* contained in the rites.” (the Liturgy)
3. It brings out “the significance of the rites for Christian life” (the Christian Life)

(Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacrament of Charity*, no. 64)

1. Where do we learn **salvation history**? The bible. The bible is inextricably linked to the Mass. To enter the mysteries of the Mass, first comes knowledge of the bible and salvation history.

This scares most Catholics. Protestants tell us that we don't know the bible and we believe them. We know more than we think! Quick, someone quote Matthew 6:9-13 for me: Our Father, ...

2. This is concerned with the meanings of the signs and symbols contained in the **Rites**.

We know *liturgy*, we know when to make the Sign of the Cross, when to sit, stand, and kneel, etc., we just don't know why we do it.

3. The significance of the rites for the Christian life. *How do these rites change me?* This is where we go from the objective to the subjective.

We must do all three. The Mass is the source and the summit of the Christian life. Without the Mass, life literally falls apart.

It's like the stained-glass windows in a beautiful old church. Each one tells a story. We will look in detail at the Book of Revelation since that's what we're reading, but there's much, much more.

The Mass itself gives the answers we seek.

Introductory Rites “Lord, Have Mercy” (Kyrie Eleison)

As we enter, as we approach what we accept as mysteries, what is our attitude, our disposition when we begin the Mass?

Kyrie Eleison; what language is this? Greek. How many languages do we find in the Mass?

For us as Latin Rite Catholics we have Latin, translated into vernacular – the language that we understand.

What other languages do we find at Mass? Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. What are they?

These were the very three languages on the titulus of Jesus' cross. The Mass makes present the mystery of Calvary even in its language.

We begin by asking for mercy. Recall Day 1 of OCIA.

The very first thing we do is acknowledge that there is an invisible reality laid out before us at Mass that we

cannot see, so we cry *Kyrie Eleison*. Why?

The Blind Men and Jesus

And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him And behold, two blind men sitting by the roadside, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "*Have mercy on us, Son of David!*" The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent; but they cried out the more, "*Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!*" And Jesus stopped and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" They said to him, "*Lord, let our eyes be opened.*" And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:30-31)

We approach the Sacred Liturgy, the Eucharist, as blind beggars who want to see Jesus.

Will we see him or miss him as he passes by?

Why are we "blind"? Sin. As St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, sin darkens our intellect and weakens our will. It acts as a veil. Sin blinds us.

So first and foremost, we need forgiveness and for our eyes to be open when Jesus comes, so we begin with the Penitential Rite.

One fruit of the Eucharist is the remission of venial sin (*venial* is Latin for *less*).

Mortal sin is spiritual death. If we die in a state of mortal sin we go to hell. The Eucharist does not forgive mortal sin which requires the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The *Catechism* on the Eucharist's Power to Cleanse Sin:

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity *wipes away venial sins*. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him. (1394)

By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins*. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin. *The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins - that is proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation*. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church. (1395)

The Eucharist enables us to break our disordered attachments.

The beginning of Mass is when people are most distracted!

The Penitential Rite is where we ask the Lord to forgive those distractions.

The Penitential Rite is very important in that it properly disposes us to enter the mystery!

How late can I arrive for Mass?

The Eucharist gives us the power to become saints! It preserves us from future mortal sin.

Now that our disposition is properly set, we move into the **Liturgy of the Word**.

- First Reading from the Old Testament

- A Psalm
- Second Reading from the Epistles (Acts during Easter Season)
- Gospel Reading
- Homily
- Profession of Faith
- Universal Prayer

The Catechism on the Liturgy of the Word

The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays *two great parts* that form a fundamental unity:

- the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions;
- the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion.

The *liturgy of the Word* and *liturgy of the Eucharist* together form "one single act of worship"; the Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord. (1346)

We Stand for the Gospel Reading: The Israelites Stand for the Torah (Nehemiah 8:1-12)

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. *And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for the purpose...* And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and *when he opened it all the people stood.* And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God; and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground...

[Also,] the Levites helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. *And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.* And Nehemi'ah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." *And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.*

Nehemiah was written as the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile. One of the first things they did was

to restore the liturgy.

Note that all stood up when the Word of God, the Torah, was brought in. Note also that women were not excluded from worship (nor was there a cry-room).

There were three postures: Stand for prayer and for the Torah, sit to listen, prostration (kneeling) for adoration – just like us!

Note how the prayer was antiphonal.

- Scripture was read clearly and carefully.
- There was a homily on the text just read to make sense of it.
- Hearths were filled with joy or sorrow. People wept. Compunction.
- The people were attentive. No attitude of “Let’s just get this over with.”
- The Jewish liturgy climaxed with a meal that included wine.

Note that:

- This is how the Jews prayed.
- This is how Mary and Joseph prayed.
- This is how Jesus prayed.

Some Protestants say that we Catholics get all this standing-kneeling-sitting posture from the Pagans. No, we don’t, we get it from the bible.

The *Catechism* on Christ’s Presence in the Inspired Word

In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: *"Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men."* Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely. *For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body.* (101-103)

The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful. . . to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by *frequent reading* of the divine Scriptures. *Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.* (133)

This is called the ***incarnational analogy*** of inspired scripture.

Also note, *“For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body.”*

This comes from the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Note that we *venerate* the Scriptures, not *adore* them. Adoration is something due to God alone (*latría* - adoration vs. *dulia* - veneration). Still, this represents a powerful statement.

What is kissed at Mass? The altar and the book of the gospels.

One bread, one Lord, one body but two tables. The table of the Lord's word and the table of the Lord's body.

Penitential Rite: "Lord Jesus, you come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness;" Lord have mercy.

We venerate Sacred Scripture. Why? St. Jerome said, "**Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.**"

Catholics are accused by Protestants of not knowing Scripture. More of Sacred Scripture (almost the entire bible) is proclaimed in the Catholic Church than in any other denomination. Some Protestant denominations use our Lectionary for that very reason.

If you go to Mass every day and Sundays for three years you will have (almost) the entire bible read to you.

Protestant ministers in denomination that do not use a lectionary usually wind up picking their "favorite" passages to preach from.

Christ is passing by in word and sacrament. Do we see him?

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

"This is My Body; This is My Blood": Jesus at the Last Supper

(Matthew 26:20-28) When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples, and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me..." Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "*Take, eat; this is my body.*" And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "*Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*"

The Eucharist is a sign that is signified.

Protestants again ask why Catholics call the Lord's Supper the Eucharist. Why? Because that what the gospel calls it. "... when he had given *thanks* (eucharisten) ..."

(1 Cor. 11: 23-29) For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

The Catechism on the Words of Consecration

(1375) It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. The Church Fathers strongly affirmed the faith of the Church in the efficacy of the Word of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about this conversion. Thus St. John Chrysostom declares:

It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. *The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's.* This is my body, he says. *This word transforms the things offered.*

And St. Ambrose says about this conversion:

Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed. . . . *Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before?* It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.

Calvary is made present, represented, on the altar. But so is heaven!

Listen carefully, during the Eucharistic Prayer the priest speaks in the third person, except when he gets to the words of institution. Then he speaks in the first person.

What does the word transubstantiation mean?

Aristotle & St. Thomas Aquinas: Substance vs. accident.

The substance (bread and wine) is changed (flesh and blood) by the blessing of the priest, but the accidents (bread and wine) remain.

Words of Institution (west) vs. Epiclesis (east).

The Prologue of John's gospel tells us that the Word made the universe. This same Word who created the universe now changes bread into himself.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race...

An anti-Catholic Protestant once asked me, "Do you think that at the Last Supper that Jesus held himself in his own hands?" Answer: Yes, I do. Are you saying your God can't do that? God is omnipotent.

Interiorly, we are in the upper room as well as Calvary. Remember, the Last Supper, death, and resurrection of Jesus are in reality one central event. It's why the Easter Triduum is one liturgy in three parts; Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday or the Easter Vigil.

How do we respond to this?

"Lord, I am not Worthy to Receive You": The Faith of the Centurion

(Matthew 8:5-13) As he entered Caper'na-um, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And he said to him,

"I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered him, "**Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.** For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. *I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.*" And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." *And the servant was healed at that very moment.*

The Centurion was a Gentile, yet Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."

Why these words? It's the interior attitude and posture of humility as well as the faith of the Centurion.

He knows that he's a dirty, good-for-nothing, Pagan. Jews NEVER go into the home of a Gentile. When the Chief Priests brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate, they stayed outside the praetorium so as not to defile themselves.

Does Jesus care about any of this? He says to the Centurion "Let's go!"

Jesus goes on to say, "*I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.*"

Who are these who will come from east and west? All of us. We are the Gentiles (non-Jews), (from *gentium*, Greek for *nations*.) What will these people of the nations do? They will sit at a banquet table.

We are the Gentiles, yet Jesus wants to come to our "house," the temple of our body.

The Catechism on Holy Communion

(1386) Before so great a sacrament, the faithful can only echo humbly and with ardent faith the words of the Centurion: "*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea*" ("Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed."). And in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom the faithful pray in the same spirit: "O Son of God, bring me into communion today with your mystical supper. I shall not tell your enemies the secret, nor kiss you with Judas' kiss. But like the good thief I cry, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

What is the "Judas' kiss"? Sacrilegious communion. Receiving in a state of mortal sin.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb or The Mass a Heaven on Earth

When studying any book of Sacred Scripture there are several initial questions that must be answered.

- When was it written? Historical conditions.
- Why was it written? Sociological conditions.
- Who wrote it? Human condition.
- What does the text say? The facts of the matter.

- What does the text mean? Theological reflection based on a faith tradition.

Ps. 137:8-9 Desolate Daughter Babylon, you shall be destroyed, blessed the one who pays you back what you have done us! Blessed the one who seizes your children and smashes them against the rock.

Revelation or *Apocalypse*, Greek for “to reveal”

A Summary of the Book of Revelation: (From the Oxford Study Bible)

The Revelation of John encourages Christians to keep faith in the face of trial and persecution. The author is a Christian prophet, John, who is persecuted himself and writes from exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea to churches in what is now western Turkey. He often employs the visionary and symbolic language characteristic of apocalyptic (“unveiling,” revelatory) literature to give his readers confidence that God, not Satan or the Roman emperor, is the Lord of history. Though there are symbolic images that seem to refer to Nero (54–68 A.D.) and parts may have been written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the book in its present form probably was written during the reign of Domitian (81–96 A.D.), a period when emperor worship was geographically extensive and coercive.

Revelation is unique among New Testament writings as it is a thoroughly apocalyptic document; it has forerunners in parts of such Old Testament books as Daniel, Isaiah, and Zechariah. Its very structure and language seem strongly influenced by Ezekiel. Like other apocalyptic writings composed in times of crisis and danger and portraying a struggle between God and God's adversaries, Revelation veils its message to hide it from pagan foes. Yet, the purpose of the symbols is to unveil or reveal to believers the ultimate divine victory and to encourage their loyalty to God. Steeped in Old Testament references, many of the seemingly cryptic statements are clarified when the reader consults these Scriptures.

When reading Revelation, use your footnotes! It's worth the effort!

Who wrote it? John of Patmos. Tradition calls him John the Divine, the Evangelist. Does it matter?

The Book of Revelation is “strongly influenced by Ezekiel.” For example:

Snippets from The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1, 2 and 3:

As I watched, a great stormwind came from the North, a large cloud with flashing fire, a bright glow all around it, and something like polished metal gleamed at the center of the fire. From within it figures in the likeness of four living creatures appeared. This is what they looked like: They were in human form, but each had four faces and four wings, and their legs were straight, the soles of their feet like the hooves of a bull, gleaming like polished brass. Human hands were under their wings, and the wings of one touched those of another. Their faces and their wings looked out on all their four sides; they did not turn when they moved, but each went straight ahead.

But you, son of man, hear me when I speak to you and do not rebel like this rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.

It was then I saw a hand stretched out to me; in it was a written scroll. He unrolled it before me; it was covered with writing front and back. Written on it was: Lamentation, wailing, woe! He said to me: Son of man, eat what you find here: eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Son of man, he said to me, feed your stomach

and fill your belly with this scroll I am giving you. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. Then he said to me, Son of man, go now to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them.

Note the similarity in style. There is a strong influence from Ezekiel as well as Daniel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

(Rev. 1: 1-3) The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must happen soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who gives witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near.

(Rev. 22: 20-21) The one who gives this testimony says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

So, is Jesus coming soon?

- **Rev 1:1:** "what must soon take place"
- **Rev. 1:3:** "the time is near"
- **Rev. 22:12:** "Behold, I am coming soon"

The Book of Revelation The Apocalypse - is often associated with dread, death, disaster, cataclysmic devastation, beasts, war, famine, etc.

The History Channel, the AMH channel, represents revelation as

- A code to be cracked
- Relates the bible to today's headlines
- Identification of "the beast" (1980, Ronald Wilson Reagan, 666)
- Its value is not that of an astrological chart.

Every age associated the events described in Revelation with their age.

The Middle Ages – the black plague – one-third of Europe killed – as "predicted" in Revelation.

Some (not Catholics!) say that Communist China is the beast. Why? Because they call the Great Wall the Red Dragon!

The fundamentalist evangelist Hal Lindsay made a fortune on his book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (still available on Amazon). Here's what Amazon.com has to say about the book:

The impact of *The Late Great Planet Earth* cannot be overstated. The New York Times called it the "no. 1 non-fiction bestseller of the decade." For Christians and non-Christians of the 1970s, Hal Lindsey's blockbuster served as a wake-up call on events soon to come and events already unfolding -- all leading up to the greatest event of all: the return of Jesus Christ. The years since have confirmed Lindsey's insights into what biblical prophecy says about the times we live in. Whether you're a church-going believer or someone who wouldn't darken the door of a Christian institution, the Bible has much to tell you about the imminent future of this planet. In the midst of an out-of-control generation, it reveals a grand design that's unfolding exactly according to plan. The rebirth of Israel. The threat of war in the Middle East. An increase in natural catastrophes. The revival of Satanism and witchcraft. These and other signs, foreseen by prophets from Moses to Jesus,

portend the coming of an antichrist . . . of a war which will bring humanity to the brink of destruction . . . and of incredible deliverance for a desperate, dying planet.

Hal Lindsay is still on TV (I think) , though with lesser impact. He looks just like Alex Trebek from Jeopardy.

Decades ago some said the swarm of black locusts were low-flying Soviet helicopters invading the United States.

All these images:

- The beast (mentioned once in Chapter 13)
- The mark of the beast, 666, again mentioned only once
- The 1000-year reign
- The 144,000
- The Whore of Babylon (fundamentalists say to this very day that this is the Catholic Church)
- Rapture

None of these are really a big deal in the Book of Revelation.

In fact, two of the things mentioned above aren't even in Revelation (the antichrist and the rapture) but seem to be associated with it by most anyway.

None of these things are really what the book is about.

- What is the Book of Revelation about? Liturgy – one that has its climax in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb – not beasts out of the sea.
- What Revelation is about is more spectacular than beasts from the sea.
- The book must be read the way it was meant to be read.
- How/where/when was it meant to be read?
- How did people “read” Revelation when they didn't have bibles yet and probably couldn't read anyway?
- The answer about how is found in Rev. 1:3

Rev 1:3: “Blessed is *he who reads aloud* the words of the prophecy, and blessed are *those who hear*, and *who keep what is written therein*; for the time is near.”

Where was it read? In churches – in the liturgy, read by a lector and heard by a congregation.

When was it heard by the first Christians gathered on the Lord's Day:

Rev 1:10: “I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day”

See The **Didache**, Chapter 14

Some say that “liturgy” was something “invented” by the Catholic Church centuries later. NO!

Justin Martyr, 2nd cent., [cf. CCC 1345]: “On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then all rise together and offer prayers

for ourselves. . . and for all others, wherever they may be. . . When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss. Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks [*eucharistian*] that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying, ‘Amen.’ When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the ‘eucharisted’ bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.”

Justin Martyr knew the people who knew the Apostles!

Lord’s Day – Easter (Resurrection appearances *always* on Sunday!) Jesus comes on a Sunday (see the gospels and the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles).

When Jesus comes, he doesn’t just “come”:

Rev. 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, *I will come in to him and eat with him* (Liturgy of the Eucharist), *and he with me* (Holy Communion).

Jesus himself links his coming with the Eucharist.

Penitential Rite: Lord Jesus, *you come in Word and in Sacrament* to strengthen us in holiness.

Jesus comes (Parousia) in the Eucharistic celebration.

David Chilton, a Protestant scholar, writes in his book *Days of Vengeance*, page 138:

“We must take seriously the Biblical doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. We must return to the Biblical pattern of worship centered on Jesus Christ, which means the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper, as well as instruction about its true meaning... In Holy Communion we are genuinely having dinner with Jesus, lifted up into His heavenly presence; and, moreover, we are feasting on Him.”

What did the prophets think that worship would be like in the day of the Messiah?

Would there be an altar? A sacrifice? A meal? Or a rock band with big speakers and PowerPoint presentations?

In the World to Come there is no eating or drinking ... but the righteous sit with crowns on their heads feasting on the brightness of the divine presence, as it says, "And they beheld God, and did eat and drink (Exodus 24:11)." Babylonian Talmud

- In the Gospel Jesus says, When you go to offer your gift at the altar... Jesus expects altars.
- An altar has only one purpose - sacrifice. Otherwise, it’s a table.
- Protestants have altar calls, but no altar.
- Protestants tell us we get things like altars, vestments, bells, incense, etc. from the pagans.
- We get it from the bible.
- Jesus said that he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

In Chapters 4 and 5 the author receives a vision of “heavenly worship”

(4:1) After this I had a vision of an open door to heaven, and I heard the trumpet like voice that had spoken to me before, saying, “Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards.”

At the Sacred Liturgy we get a glimpse into heaven without having to die. (Eastern iconostasis) I’m closet Eastern Rite.

What does John see?

John’s Vision of the Heavenly Worship (Revelation 4-5)

- A trumpet sound (the trumpet – shofar – were like organs; used in Israel’s temple worship. Not the organ or piano or guitar.
- God on his throne
- Surrounded by Elders (Gk *presbyters*); priests, in *white robes* with crowns Candles (“seven torches of fire”) and a Crystal Floor around the Throne (The heavenly temple has a crystal (marble) floor.)
- Angels (“four living creatures”; the Seraphim)
- Angels sing this song: “Holy, holy, holy!” (Why? Jesus is present!)
- The People fall down in worship, singing Hymns of Praise
- A Sacred Book must be read (the “Scroll” no one is worthy to open)
- At the high point, The Lamb appears, standing as if Slain
- Incense (“The Prayers of the Saints”) offered by Angels and Saints
- They Sing a “New Song”: “Worthy is the Lamb”
- They say “Amen” and fall down again in worship

At the Mass we say, For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours NOW and forever.

Jesus is present on the altar.

In the Mass, Jesus is truly coming soon.

During the Mass heaven touches down on earth in the church. Why can’t we get married on the beach?

Look at any Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Take the Preface I for Lent as an example:

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift out hearts to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just.

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,

Lord, holy Father,
almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

... and it **always** ends something like:

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory
as without end we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts ...

Where does this language from? The Book of Revelation.

Every saint and angel is present around that altar!

During the Mass heaven touches down on earth – literally.

Even the Liturgy of the Book of Revelation is divided into two parts; a Liturgy of the Word and a Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- **Part I - Chapters 1-11: A book has to be opened; it has seven seals; the focus is all on this book that must be read. Remember, biblically seven represents perfection.**

From Chapter 5: I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who sat on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a mighty angel who proclaimed in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to examine it. I shed many tears because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to examine it. One of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, enabling him to open the scroll with its seven seals."

- **Part II - Chapters 12-22: Seven chalices must be poured out; climaxes in a vision of Christ's coming, which is described as the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb"; Christ enters into communion with his Bride, the Church**

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Rev 19:1-3, 6-9: After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just... Once more they cried, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."... Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" -- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: **Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.**" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Does this sound Familiar? **“Behold the Lamb of God. Behold he who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called the supper of the Lamb.”**

What will happen at the final Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

Rev 21:2-5: And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

What does the Catechism have to say?

CCC 1137: “The book of Revelation of St. John, read in the Church’s liturgy, first reveals to us, ‘A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne’: ‘the Lord God’ [Rev. 4:2]. It then shows the Lamb, ‘standing as though it had been slain’ [Rev. 5:6]: Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one ‘who offers and is offered, who gives and is given.’ Finally, it presents the river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb,’ one of the most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit [Rev. 22:1, cf. 21:6, Jn 4:10-14].”

CCC 1090: In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory.”

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 110-111:

“The Apocalypse has presented the essential contents of the Eucharistic sacrament in an impressive form that sets a standard for every local liturgy. From the point of view of the Apocalypse, the essential matter of all Eucharistic liturgy is its participation in the heavenly liturgy.”

What is Parousia? (παρουσία) an ancient Greek word meaning presence, arrival, or official visit.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1988), 203: “Every Eucharist is Parousia, the Lord’s coming...”

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith:*

The Church as Communion (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 110-111: “the Apocalypse has presented the essential contents of the Eucharistic sacrament in an impressive form that sets a standard for every local liturgy. From the point of view of the Apocalypse, the essential matter of all Eucharistic liturgy is its participation in the heavenly liturgy.”

Yes, Jesus will return to earth at the end of time, but even now he comes.

Jesus came, he comes, he will come again. We live in the tension between the already and the not yet.

The promise of the incarnation – Jesus makes his dwelling with men in the Eucharist.

The Road to Emmaus:

- Jesus explains scripture (Liturgy of the Word)
- He gives thanks and breaks bread (He is recognized in the Eucharist)
- He vanishes from their sight, he doesn't vanish, he remains, in a whole new way.

Are you getting a glimpse into eternity? How does it move you?

From the Solemn Blessing for Ash Wednesday:

Pour out a spirit of compunction, O God,
on those who bow before your majesty,
and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise
to those who do penance.
Through Christ our Lord.

What is *compunction*? Literally, is a feeling of guilt. Liturgically it is the gift of tears. Tears of sorrow and tears of joy. (Again, I'm closet Eastern Rite)

In Summary:

- Where is the Book of Revelation *revealing*? When it's read, and is it meant to be read? In the liturgy.
- Scott Hans says in The Lamb's Supper, the Protestants have the menu which they study, but we have the meal.
- Sadly, since Protestants do not have the Eucharist, they don't understand how Jesus comes.
- Sadly, their buildings possess a Divine Absence, not the Divine Presence.
- The most important message of the Book of Revelation is that there is an eternal liturgy taking place in heaven – and we can participate in it here on earth at the Eucharistic Liturgy – the Mass.
- The Mass is a foretaste of the heavenly reality, yet some some want it over quickly.

Another good book is one by Michael Barber, Coming Soon – Unlocking the Book of Revelation, Emmaus Press, 2005.

We go to heaven when we go to Mass!

IMAGERY FAMILIAR TO CATHOLICS FROM THE MASS

Adapted from Scott Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 119-120.

Image	Citation in Revelation
Sunday worship	1:10
a high priest	1:13
an altar	8:3-4; 11:1; 14:18
priests (“presbyteroi”)	4:4; 11:15; 14:3; 19:4
holy vestments	1:13; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 15:6; 19:13-14
consecrated celibacy	14:4
men in white robes	4:4
the tabernacle (tent)	15:5
lampstands (candlesticks/Menorah)	1:12; 2:5
incense	5:8; 8:3-5
chalices	15:7, 16; 21:9
The Sign of the Cross (“tau”)	7:3; 14:1; 22:4
for you alone are the holy one	15:3-4
Alleluia (Hallelujah)	19:1, 3, 4, 6
Holy, Holy, Holy	4:8
Amen	19:4; 22:21
The Lamb of God	5:6
intercession of angels and saints	5:8; 6:9-10; 8:3-4
antiphonal chant	4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 18:1-8
silent contemplation	8:1
kneeling before Christ	2:17, 4:10
God’s faithful singing praise	4:8; 5:9; 14:3; 15:3
The marriage supper of the Lamb	19:9, 17