



Why are baptized Catholics asked to arrive early (before the start of the liturgy) for Mass and to limit our conversation(s) within the Worship Space.

It's actually quite simple when we take a few moments to reflect upon it:

1. In the history of the Church, since the Third Century CE, the faithful have consciously arrived early before the liturgy in order to prayerfully gather to recite a Prayer Before the Mass (such as those from St Ambrose or St Aquinas), offer an Act of Oblation Before the Mass, and/or Prayers Before Receiving Communion; and
2. Since we are all sinners (in order to ensure we are in the proper condition or disposition for the celebration of the Mass), we confess our venial sins and beseech God's forgiveness. Mortal sins still require the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Within the Order of the Mass, an exchange between the celebrant Priest and the gathered assembly is the essence of the Penitential Act (via the recitation of the Confiteor, Lord Have Mercy and/or the Kyrie). Therefore, before the Mass begins, the faithful arrive and have ample time to complete a prayerful recollection of their sins in preparation and anticipation of the Mass Priest celebrant stating: *"Brethren, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries"* (followed by a brief period of silence). The Penitential Act concludes with the Priest proffering a formula of absolution for himself and all present. This formula however, is not a sacramental absolution, but a petition for remission, so that we can worthily celebrate the mysteries of the Holy Mass.

The Four Ends of Mass



Any liturgy of the Mass (Daily, Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation) has four ends or purposes:

1. **Adoration** – The Holy Mass is first and foremost an act of loving adoration. It is worship of God our Father. Why? Because he deserves it. Almighty God is the most perfect of all Beings, the self-existing one, and all that exists owes its existence to him. He is the Supreme Good, the Good from which all other goods receive their meaning. And he is Love itself, giving of himself from all eternity. He alone is worthy of our awe-struck adoration.

“Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created,” the saints and angels cry in the Book of Revelation 4:11, and the Mass is participation in this heavenly worship.

2. **Thanksgiving** – All that we are and have comes from God’s generous hand. Every good, every blessing finds its source in God alone, and our very existence is dependent on His will. In response to God’s endless generosity, which we often don’t even notice, thanksgiving is the only acceptable and appropriate response.

3. **Atonement** – We are all sinners, and while we do our best to rationalize and minimize it, all sin is a grave offense against God, incurring his just wrath. But while we all deserve a just judgment, we are not without hope. On the Cross, Jesus Christ atoned for our sins totally and completely, and we have the assurance that if we turn to him in repentance and faith, we can find forgiveness and healing.

The sacrifice of Christ on the Holy Cross is our certain hope, and the Holy Mass is the representation of this sacrifice [of thanksgiving and atonement]. Therefore, the third end of the Mass is atonement for our sins. The Book of Revelation 5:6 describes Christ appearing as a “Lamb as if it had been slain.” In heaven, Jesus stands before God’s throne, offering God, the Father his once for all sacrifice in continual atonement for our sins and the sins of the whole world. This reality is made present at every Mass. (cf. Hebrews 7:27 and 10:1-18)

4. **Petition** – The Mass is a powerful form of prayer. In fact, it is *the* most powerful prayer the Church possesses. St. Jerome once said, “Without doubt, the Lord grants all favors, which are asked of Him in Mass, provided they be fitting for us.” (cf. *On the Mysteries and the Treatise of the Sacraments* (387CE)) Many of the saints tell us that bringing our requests before Our Lord during the Mass is one of the most effective ways to obtain all that we need spiritually and physically.

Go to Mass

In every Mass, Jesus Christ descends upon the altar in the fullness of His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. He is truly present, giving himself to us completely in the Holy Eucharist. It is truly the sacrifice of Calvary made present once again. What a beautiful and profound reality! As St. Padre Pio once said, “If we only knew how God regards this Sacrifice, we would risk our lives to be present at a single Mass.” Why would we miss the entire Mass for anything in this world?

(SR: <https://www.catholicgentleman.net/2014/10/four-ends-mass/>)