

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 & medicine can be consumed, of course. The purpose is to help us prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

No Food & Drink in Church: The exceptions would be a drink for small children, water for the priest or choir (if discreet) & 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 & 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, & it doesn't help us pray better. Can you imagine the Pope popping gum in during Mass?

Cross yourself with Holy Water on entering & 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 & don't do it without saying a prayer.

Dress modestly & 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 & prepare yourself better for Mass. It also gives children a chance to adjust to the new setting and you can better set expectations for behavior.

Cell phones should never be used in Mass for calls or texting: The exceptions are emergencies (big ones, not everyday ones) & 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. We live in Texas (Howdy!). In Texas men don't sit when a woman is standing.

When we enter & 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 church, it is not the time or place to visit with those around you. If you must talk, do so as quietly & 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: Every parent knows that sometimes the baby is going to have a bad day. Sit on the end of a pew, if you can, & take your child to the back if they get fussy. There is no reason to be embarrassed about having to quiet your child in the back of the church. Children are a gift from God and the future of our Church. Take advantage of the Children's Book Box located at the entry of the Church, it's a great way to engage your little ones during Mass.

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 & 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 instead of listening.

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

Do not leave Mass early: We should stay to the end of the recession & 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 & ought not to.

Pray after Mass, if you feel called to do so: It is a good custom which we have here at St. Mary's, though not required, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving after Mass is over.

Leave quietly: We encourage you to visit with others once you are outside of the church. It is important that we don't disturb others who want to stay & pray. So, please leave quietly & then visit outside or in the Holy Family Center afterwards.