

The Mass of the Roman Rite

The Meaning of “the Mass”

Catechism: The Eucharist or principal sacramental celebration of the Church... It is called “Mass” (from the Latin *missa*) because of the “mission” or “sending” with which the liturgical celebration concludes (Latin: *Ite, Missa est* [“Go forth, the Mass is ended”). (CCC Index, “Mass”; cf. CCC 1332)

The Early Medieval Papal “Mass” (7th Century)

Ordo Romanus I: After it is finished, whichever *deacon* the archdeacon has appointed glances towards the pope, so that he may signal to him, and *chants to the people: Go, the Mass is finished* (Latin *Ite, missa est*). Resp[onse]: *Thanks be to God*. (Latin *Deo gratias*).¹

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Catechism: *The liturgical traditions or rites presently in use in the Church are the Latin (principally the Roman rite, but also the rites of certain local churches, such as the Ambrosian rite, or those of certain religious orders) and the Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite, and Chaldean rites.* (CCC 1202)

St. Justin Martyr: The Ancient Roman Mass (2nd Century)

On... the day of the sun,	1. Gathering (Greek <i>synaxis</i>)
all... gather in the same place.	
The memoirs of the apostles	2. Readings (OT and Gospels)
and the writings of the prophets are read,	
as much as time permits.	
When the reader has finished, he who presides	3. Homily
over those gathered admonishes and challenges	
them to imitate these beautiful things.	
Then we all rise together and offer prayers	4. Prayers of the Faithful
for ourselves ... and for all others,	
wherever they may be...	
When the prayers are concluded	5. Kiss of Peace
we exchange the kiss.	
Then someone brings bread and a cup of water	6. Offertory
and wine mixed together to him who presides...	
He takes them and offers praise and glory to the	7. Eucharistic Prayer
Father of the universe, through the name of the Son	
and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time	

¹ *Ordo Romanus* no. 124. John F. Romano, *Liturgy and Society in Early Medieval Rome* (London and New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2014), 248.

he gives thanks (in Greek: *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.’

[T]hose whom we call deacons
give to those present
the “eucharisted” bread, wine and water
and take them to those who are absent.²

8. Communion under Both Kinds

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Why do we call the Mass “the Mass”? What was the Roman Mass like in the 2nd Century? How was it similar to and different from the Mass today?

2. How is the mass described by St. Justin Martyr similar to the Mass today? How is it different?

For Further Reading

1. Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (2 vols.; trans. Francis A. Brunner, C. SS. R.; repr. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 2012 [orig. 1951]).

[The classic work on the history and development of the Roman Mass; hugely influential in the liturgical movement in the 20th century.]

2. Uwe Michael Lang. *The Roman Mass: From Early Christian Origins to Tridentine Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

[An up-to-date, and exhaustive study of the history and development of the Roman Mass from the Last Supper to the Council of Trent by a world-renowned scholar of the liturgy.]

² Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 65-67; quoted in CCC 1345.