

From the Bishop

1. WHAT DOES CHRIST OFFER THROUGH THE MASS: THE INTRODUCTORY RITES (1)

The Mass is the great prayer of the Risen Jesus, the Son of God, to God the Father. He wants heart-felt participation from each of us so we can receive the gifts he offers.

To become aware of his presence

The first purpose of the *Introductory Rites* is to recognise the presence of the Risen Jesus himself. He seeks to unite us through the Holy Spirit with himself and each other. He used the image of the vine and its branches during the Last Supper.¹

Jesus seeks to dispose us also to hear him in the Liturgy of the Word; and to unite our lives with him as he offers himself to God the Father in the Liturgy of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Entrance Procession : honouring Jesus' presence

To help us focus upon the Risen Jesus and the relationship he seeks with us, we

- stand as a community to show that we join together with him, like branches to a vine
- honour the processional cross, the reminder of his love for us
- recognise the Book of the Gospel as a reminder that he will teach us through his Word
- recognise the ordained celebrant coming last as the one through whom Christ will serve all during the Mass.

Veneration of the Altar: honouring his relationship with us

The altar is the most sacred symbol of the Risen Jesus. The celebrant reminds us of our relationship with him as he

- bows before the altar to acknowledge we relate with the Son of God
- kisses the altar to acknowledge the intimacy of the relationships the Risen Jesus wants with each person present.

The Sign of the Cross and the Greetings

The celebrant goes to the Presidential Chair as the one through whom the Risen Jesus acts in the Mass.

Then there are

- the Sign of the Cross, the most ancient sign of self identification with the Risen Jesus and that we will open our hearts to him in the Mass
- the Greeting through which the Celebrant and the congregation wish each other experiences Christ offers as they participate in the Mass together.

Reflection: Do I focus on the ritual to help me appreciate I am in the presence of the Risen Jesus who seeks to draw all present into a worshipping community?

Next week: the Penitential Act and the Collect Prayer

¹ John 15:5