

Symbolism in the Mass

Signing with Holy water as we enter the house of God: Simply put, we bless ourselves with holy water to remind us of our Baptism and to especially remind us of Jesus, into whose church we were received at Baptism.

Genuflecting to the Tabernacle: God is present in this, his house. It is our way of greeting Him whenever we visit, also when we leave.

Quietness and reflection before Mass begins: It shows respect for this Holy home and the visitors to it who are talking with God in prayer.

Singing the hymns and responses: is a prayer to God which all should participate in. God never cringes when we sing off tune – he gave us our voices to praise Him. Answering the responses is also our form of prayer in union with the Celebrant of the Mass.

Signing ourselves with three crosses before the Gospel is read: This is a way to remind us to put God in my thoughts, in my words, and in my heart. We use our right thumb to make the cross symbol on the forehead, the lips and over the heart while saying the words above.

The Sign of Peace: By offering each other the Sign of Peace at Mass, we share that peace with the entire Body of Christ. Jesus also told us to reconcile with one another before approaching the altar of God (Matthew 5:23). The Sign of Peace is a gesture of Reconciliation with those around us before coming to the altar to receive Holy Communion it is not meant to be a 'hey, how ya doin' moment. Simply saying the words 'Peace be with you', to those near you, is reverent and appropriate. Respond to this greeting by saying 'and with you'.

Bowing before we receive communion: This is another form of our respect for sharing in the Last Supper. Even if you do not take it in both forms, bowing as you pass the minister distributing communion is showing respect for the presence of God.

Leaving after Communion: When invited to someone's home for dinner it is rude to finish dessert and rush out and yet many do exactly this when dining with God. Instead return to your pew and ask God to help you to learn how to rejoice in His gift of a meal with us.

Finishing Mass to the end: Is a wonderful way to thank God for the chance to share in His banquet. We need to stay in place until the celebrant has exited the church. There is no award for the first one out of the parking lot but there can be a big reward in joining your fellow parishioners and visitors in the hall afterward for conversation and lite snack. This is a fantastic way to get to know people.

Try it – it doesn't hurt!