

The Bible tells us that at his Last Supper before his death Jesus blessed bread and wine, and urged his disciples to eat and drink them as a sign that his body was broken and his blood was shed to save them and us. In the Mass we obey that command, and we believe that by consuming spiritual food we are strengthened spiritually by God.



The priest raises his hands and begins to say the communion prayer. After the first part of the communion prayers, the bell rings to show that we can sit down.

When the priest prays that the bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of Jesus, a bell rings three times for the bread and three more for the wine.

The three rings follow the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, and a very long tradition in the Western Church regards these words as of capital importance in this whole service. The Church has never been able to reach total agreement on exactly at what point ordinary bread and wine become also the sacramental body and blood of our Lord, his Real Presence. In this church we have chosen to keep within the historic understanding of the Western Church, so we attach the greatest significance to the words of our Lord, spoken at the Last Supper ; our ceremonial actions reflect this. But we acknowledge that this is not the only way of understanding this most wonderful and personal of mysteries, and for this reason all Christians of every tradition are most welcome to join us at the communion rail.

The communion prayers also include the Lord's Prayer and a Prayer of Humble Access, for everyone to join in.

When the communion prayers are finished, the priest invites everyone to go up to the rail, queuing in the central gangway, and the bell is rung once more. Anyone who has been taught how to receive the bread and wine in any Christian church may do so at All Saints, holding out their hands to show that they want to receive. Others go up too, but keep their hands at their sides to show that they want to receive a blessing. The priest dispenses the bread and the blessings, and the server the wine. When you have received, please go back to your seat via the side routes, making space for those in the queue behind you to receive as well.

After the communion

The priest raises his hands and says a final prayer, which like the Collect changes from week to week, and then we stand to say the Gloria together, as a way of saying thank-you to God for what we have received from him.

Finally the priest makes any necessary announcements and gives us a blessing, and the server sends us out. The word "Mass" is thought to come from the Latin words that used to be said at this point, *Ite, missa est*. Then the priest and server reverence the altar and go out.



What happens during Low Mass?

When you arrive

You should be given, or find in a rack near the door, a copy of a folded service sheet which contains all of the words that will be said, apart from the intercessory prayers and the preacher's sermon, which might be said "off the cuff" to some extent. The service sheet shows in bold text the words that are for everybody to say, as well when one should sit or stand.



You should also be able to find envelopes with a gift aid declaration printed on them in the racks near the doors. If you are a tax-payer, please put into the envelope whatever money you will put into the collection plate, and fill in the details on the envelope to enable us to reclaim from the government the tax that you have paid on it.

You are welcome to sit anywhere in the pews, apart from the longitudinal benches in front of the eagle lectern where the priest and server will sit.

The Introduction

A bell rings to mark the start of the service, prompting us to be quiet and focus our thoughts on the presence of God.

God is holy, so we begin by confessing our shortcomings and asking for his mercy. All Saints uses the traditional Greek words

Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy), *Christe eleison* (Christ, have mercy), *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy). You could imagine that you are addressing these three phrases to the three persons of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The priest, who is usually either Father John the Rector or Father Dave the Curate, wears special robes called vestments. We have several sets of vestments in different colours, corresponding to the church seasons, including:

- ◆ **purple** in Lent and Advent, as a sign of repentance of our sins;
- ◆ **gold** at Easter, reflecting God's glory;
- ◆ **green** at Trinity, signifying our need to grow spiritually like plants in a field;
- ◆ **red** at Whitsun, like the flames of fire which appeared above the apostles, or on saints' days, recalling the blood shed by the martyrs.

We admit to God and each other that we come as sinners. The priest then prays that God will forgive us and make us more holy, making the sign of the cross. Many people respond by crossing themselves where the service sheet has the symbol ✠, to confirm that they want to receive God's blessing. Sometimes the priest sprinkles the congregation with water, as a sign of God making us clean.

The church has a prayer for each Sunday called "the Collect of the day". The priest says the Collect with hands raised, to show that it is the prayer of us all, hence the name Collect.

The remainder of the service is divided into two parts, one concerning God's word in the Bible, and the other concerning the sacrament of bread and wine.

The Service of the Word

The server goes to the eagle lectern to read a passage from the Bible, either from the Old Testament which describes God's relationship with people before the time of Jesus, or one of the New Testament writings from the days of the early church.



Then the priest reads a passage from the Gospels, which are the four books of the Bible that describe Jesus's life and death two thousand years ago.

The Gospel reading is followed by the sermon; the preacher spends a few minutes explaining the readings and suggesting how we should apply them so that we live as God wants today.



After the sermon we stand to say the Nicene Creed, which was composed in a meeting at Nicea in 325 AD. It summarizes the Christian beliefs about God in a few paragraphs, so that we can all be clear that we believe the same things. For one sentence of the creed the priest and server genuflect, i.e. they touch the right knee on the ground, to show particular honour to the Incarnation of Jesus as a human.

After the Creed the priest and server say the intercessory prayers. When a prayer ends with the words "Lord, hear us" please respond by saying: "Lord, graciously hear us".



The Service of the Sacrament

That concludes the service of the word. The priest and server go up to the High Altar which will be the focus of the rest of the service. On arrival there they acknowledge its special status by reverencing it.

While they do so, everyone is invited to put some money in the collection bag, though many will have given by Standing Order already. All Saints costs nearly £3,000 per week to run, and donations are our only source of income.

An Altar is a table that is only used for holy things, and the High Altar is the one on top of the steps at the east end of the building. It usually has a cloth hanging on the side facing the congregation, in the same colour as the vestments.



On the altar, under a small cloth cover of the same colour, are the communion vessels: a metal cup called a chalice for the wine, and a small metal plate called a paten for the bread.

The priest says prayers over the bread and wine, followed by a ceremonial hand-washing called "the lavabo". He also blesses the collection, setting it apart for holy use.

The word Sacrament has its roots in a Roman soldier's oath of service, but in the church it means an action that Jesus commanded us to do, in which God is invisibly at work as well as what you can see happening.