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## **What You Should Know About Attending the Traditional Latin Mass (Extraordinary Form)**



**Questions, Answers, Pointers**

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## Tips for Participating in the Traditional Latin Mass (Extraordinary Form)



With the many new locations for the Traditional Latin Mass (Extraordinary Form) coming available, people who have wondered about it are starting to attend. It's normal to have concerns regarding how to participate in an unfamiliar rite, particularly if you've been attending the *Novus Ordo* (Ordinary form) regularly. Some differences between the two forms of the Roman rite should be no cause for anxiety.

The Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* merely reiterates what Popes from St. Pius X onward have emphasized regarding active participation since a reform of the Roman liturgy began at the directive of Blessed Pope Pius IX. Working from the definitive Latin text, the term *participatio actuosa* refers to an interior involvement - attentiveness of the heart and soul - in the liturgical celebration,

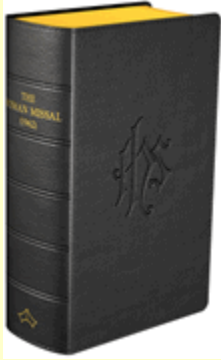
**not “active participation” meaning exterior activity alone, although exterior activity is not excluded.** This misunderstanding of the Latin words has led to unwarranted criticisms of the Traditional Latin Mass by those who seek to have it suppressed.

**The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, regardless of which form or rite in which it is celebrated, always is and will be the perfect offering to the Father by the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.** Therefore it is not appropriate to play the "My Mass is better than your Mass" game, which trivializes this gift of God to the human race.

### **10 Tips for Getting the Most Out of the Mass**

1. If you are a newcomer to this form of the Roman rite, recognize that you have been invited by God Himself through a particular grace to be motivated to attend it. He has much to reveal to you by your attending this Mass, even if the first few times you go you find it “over your head”, baffling, or confusing. Do

not give up because it may take six or seven times before you begin to be comfortable. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. The spiritual benefits will amaze you.

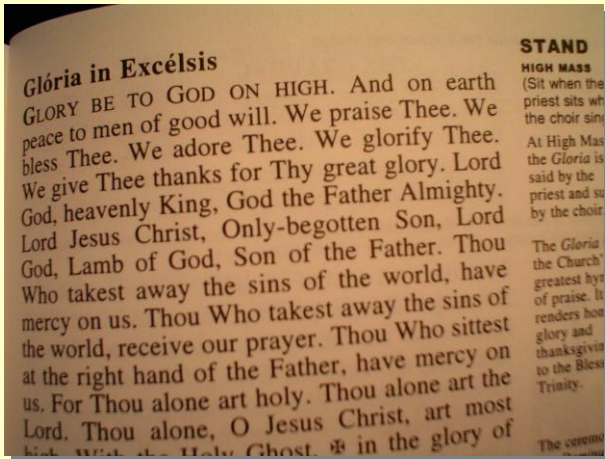


2. Obtain a 1962 Roman Missal. This is really important for getting the most out of assisting at the Traditional Mass. Baronius Press, Angelus Press, and the FSSP all have missals you can use to participate in the 1962 Mass. For those who like the great liturgical commentaries in the St. Andrew missal (1952 edition), you may find it at various locations on the internet. Ask someone who is experienced to help you learn how to use the missal. A real benefit of owning your own copy is that some, like the Father Lasance, have pictures of what the priest is doing so you can follow along more easily, and also because you can read the daily Mass propers (see #6 under "Seven Common Questions") when you can't attend daily Mass. The English translations from the Latin are not only accurate, they are beautiful.

3. Have no anxiety over keeping up with the priest. Much of the Traditional Latin Mass is said in a low voice by the priest, because **part of the Judeo-Christian liturgical heritage involves sacred mysteries which are prayed inaudibly by the priest.** The silent parts of the Traditional Latin Mass are opportunities for **contemplation of the great mystery of the Sacrifice of the Cross** (*participatio actiosa*). After you have attended this Mass for awhile, you will find it easier to follow along with the priest. Meanwhile, take time to read the excellent English translations opposite the Latin text in the missal of your choice before assisting at Mass, and meditate on them.

4. It is also a good idea to simply watch the sacred actions of the priest and the servers while contemplating their meaning. **The richness of the Extraordinary Form consists of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences which are meant to bring one to the highest possible level of unity with God.** The language of love is not merely a spoken one, nor does it require a great deal of activity to convey its meaning.





5. There is a great deal more standing, kneeling, and sitting at the Traditional Mass than at the Ordinary form. If you are uncertain what to do, follow the instructions in your missal and watch what others are doing.
6. Ask an experienced person to help you learn to pronounce the responses in Latin that are expected of the congregation

when attending the Traditional Mass. Most of them are very simple. Latin has a great advantage: it has only one sound for each of the five vowels, and the diphthongs are easily mastered as well. In addition, since much of English is based on Latin, the meaning of the phrases is fairly simple to learn, especially with the vernacular translation beside the Latin.

7. The priest proclaims the Epistle and Gospel at the altar, with the congregation making the appropriate responses in Latin. After the priest has read the Gospel at the altar he proceeds to the pulpit where **the usual custom is for him to read them in the vernacular to the people, followed by his sermon.**
8. Unlike at the *Novus Ordo*, the *Pater Noster* (Our Father) is said aloud **only by the priest.** The laity answer with the servers the final line of the prayer: *sed libéra nos a malo* (but deliver us from evil).
9. The manner of receiving Holy Communion is kneeling and on the tongue, **not in the hand.** Only those with physical disabilities should receive Holy Communion standing or sitting.

**People with celiac disease should let the priest know so they can receive the Precious Blood.** Otherwise, Communion is given under the species of bread only. **Unlike in the Ordinary form, the communicant does not answer “Amen” before receiving the Host.** Be sure to acquaint yourself with the words of the extraordinarily beautiful blessing the priest gives to you as he makes the sign of the cross and places the sacred Host on your tongue.

In English: *May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen.*



10. After the Mass is over, the priest (at Low Masses only) usually, according to custom, leads the congregation in the Leonine prayers for the conversion of Russia. The Leonine prayers were prescribed by Pope Leo XIII who wrote the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, and reinforced by Popes Pius XI and XII. For eighty years (1885-1965) the prayers were said after Low Masses, but, while never proscribed, **they became optional after Vatican II, and thus were dropped altogether nearly everywhere.** The Leonine prayers are usually said in the vernacular, but may also be said in Latin, depending on the custom of the place.



### **Seven Common Questions About the Extraordinary Form**

1. What does the term “assisting at Mass” mean? This term has been used for many years, but has fallen by the wayside since the 1970s. You will hear people attending the Extraordinary Form use it to describe what they do when attending Mass. The term could equally be used to describe attending the *Novus Ordo*.

The theological meaning of the sacred priesthood is manifold, but a central point is that **a man is ordained a priest specifically to offer sacrifice.** In the

Catholic religion that means the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where the priest immolates the Sacred Victim (Christ) in an unbloody manner at the altar during the Consecration. The laity “assist” at Mass not in that they “help” the priest because the priest needs no “help” - that is not the meaning of “assist.” **Rather it means to participate mentally, spiritually, and physically in the sacred mysteries in the role proper to the non-ordained.**

Another way to say it is that the laity, through the sacrament of Baptism, are consecrated to a common, holy priesthood. By virtue of this sacrament we share in the priesthood of Christ and along with the ordained priest at Mass we offer the Divine Victim to the Father. We offer ourselves as members of Christ's mystical body as well. **All the Faithful, both the immolating priest and the laity assisting, join ranks in completing the Holy Sacrifice by the priestly action of consuming the Victim through reception of Holy Communion.**

2. Why do women cover their heads in church? At most Traditional Masses you will see many women wearing hats or veils. Under the 1917 code of canon law, women were required to have their heads covered. **Custom has the force of law in the Church.** Because women covered their heads in church since the time of the early Church, its inclusion in the 1917 code was only formalizing what had been a venerable practice and which appeared in law in various places long before. This topic is not mentioned in the 1983 code at all. After Vatican II with the strong feminist movement which entered the church, covering of one’s head fell out of use, but technically speaking, it is part of our tradition and ought to be respectfully observed. It is also appropriate for women to cover their heads when attending the *Novus Ordo*.



3. How should people dress when attending the Extraordinary Form? As a rule, **people tend to dress more formally at the Traditional Latin Mass** than at the *Novus Ordo* in the United States. Women wear suits, dresses, or skirts and blouses and men wear either suit and tie or shirt with tie. The thinking behind this is simple: **we are going to God's house, the courts of the Lord, to worship Him.** Angels are present even though we can't see them. If you were

going to see the President of the United States or the Queen of England, what would you wear? God is worthy of our best mode of dress.



4. Why does the priest appear to have his back to the people? Appearances can be very deceiving. **In reality, the priest is facing the altar, which represents liturgical east regardless of its actual physical orientation.** The meaning of liturgical east in the New Testament begins with the story of the Magi, who came to worship the Child as they followed a star in the east. The Magi represent the gentiles called to Christ. The priest, as *alter Christus* (another Christ), leads the people, all facing the same direction, in the supreme act of worship: the representation to the Father of the Sacrifice of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Because**

**the Church teaches that Christ will come again out of the heavens from the east to judge the living and the dead, the priest leads the people in joyful expectation of this Second Coming as all face liturgical east.**

5. What is so important about the Traditional Mass being prayed only in Latin? First of all, **Latin is the official language of the Church and its sacred language as well.** Theological meanings are very precise when expressed in Latin, which is also an unchanging language. The past 40 years have been a powerful lesson in how the secular invades the sanctuary, and how political agendas can control sacred rites and rob them of their true meaning through the vernacular. Praying in Latin allows for none of that.

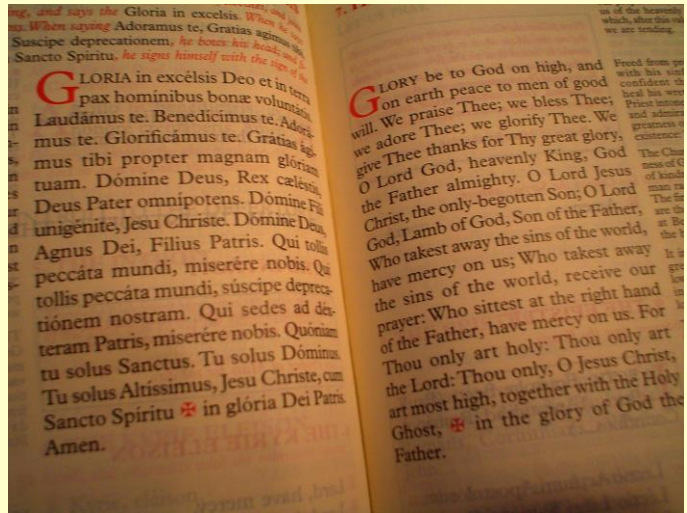
There is no need for Spanish Masses, Vietnamese Masses, English Masses, French, Mandarin, Swahili, Russian or other Masses when the sacred liturgy is celebrated in Latin. People of all races and languages can worship side by side at the Extraordinary Form. **The vernacular divides; Latin unites.** Anyone from anywhere in the world can walk into the Extraordinary Form and immediately know and understand what is going on. People of various ethnicities in parishes can all be in the same place at the same time at Mass and respond to the priest in the same language.

6. What is meant by the terms “propers” and “ordinary” or “common” of the Mass? The propers of the Mass are the prayers and readings proper to the

Sunday or feast: the *Introit, Collect* (prayer), *Gradual, Tract, Offertory, Communion* and *Postcommunion*.

The ordinary of the Mass is what is prayed at every Mass.

These prayers are the *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Offertory, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*, and the Canon of the Mass. There is also a proper Offertory prayer along with the common or ordinary Offertory prayers. At most Traditional Mass locations a red book from the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei is available with the ordinary of the Mass in it, and a supplemental set of propers for the specific Sunday or feast celebrated.



7. How old is the Traditional Latin Mass? The majority of the Mass was in use for well over 1500 years. Some people call it the Mass of Pius V, but that is not really correct. **St. Pius the V did not make up his own Mass in the 1500s.** He codified the Roman Rite as it came from Apostolic times and removed abuses. He also said that any rite over 200 years old could continue to be celebrated (Dominican, Sarum, Braga, Carthusian, and Carmelite rites for example).

The *Novus Ordo* (Ordinary Form) is rightfully called the Mass of Paul VI because it was assembled from many different origins by a committee and given approval by Pope Paul VI. It did not grow organically from the existing Roman rite as the Second Vatican Council called for. **That statement does not call into question its validity.** The Church teaches us that the Holy Spirit guarantees the infallibility of the Pope in matters of Faith and morals so regardless of the break with the tradition of organic growth, the Ordinary form remains valid and a source of grace.

You can find many resources explaining the meaning of the Traditional Latin Mass on the internet, which allows you to delve more deeply into some of the points mentioned here and explore new ones. **The most important thing to do when attending the Traditional Latin Mass is to open your heart to God, fully trusting that He will show you what you need to be closer to Him through this venerable liturgy.**

**For more information:**

<http://unavoce.org/>

<http://www.sanctamissa.org/en/index.html> (a resource for priests but laity can learn a lot here).

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/7848318/Psallite-Sapienter-A-Musicians-Guide-to-the-Extraordinary-Form> (for musicians).

<http://fssp.com/press/> (site for the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, USA).

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