

Preparing Oneself for the Celebration of the Mass *Ad orientem*

This guide is created to help prepare for Mass celebrated *Ad orientem*. So that if there were concerns and worries, they are acknowledged, and hopefully, addressed. At every Mass, it is important not to lose sight of what God is doing for us through His Son, Jesus. Only then will we find ourselves truly and actively participating in adoring and giving thanks to God and then engage in the work of making ourselves and the world holy.

Pray to the Holy Spirit.

It is important to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our best teacher on praying. Because it is the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus that are at work during the Eucharistic Prayer, the same Holy Spirit can help us enter more deeply in prayer at Mass.

Pray, “Come, Holy Spirit, come!” and share your thoughts and concerns with the Holy Spirit.

If you have not participated in the celebration of the Mass *ad orientem* (towards the east), recognize that it will be a new experience for you. New is not necessarily bad; it could actually bring new insights to what is so familiar to us, Catholics.

Join Many Catholics Before Us.

At Saint Patrick’s, we are blessed to have our church oriented in the east-west axis. The apse, where the altar is, is on the east. And so are the crucifix above the altar and the tabernacle.

The *ad orientem* posture may appear to some as something new. But the reality is the posture is one tradition that goes back from the beginning of the Church. When Jesus disclosed his second coming in the direction of the east (see Matthew 24:27), early Christians anticipated his second coming and prayed facing the east. For older Catholics, they may have had the experience of celebrating the Mass *ad orientem* through the Latin Mass. Please note: Mass *Ad orientem* is not the same as the Latin Mass.

If not yet done, please read the [FAQ Sheet on Mass *Ad orientem*](#).

Same Mass, Different Orientation.

As the celebration of the Mass *Ad orientem* unfolds, you will soon come to realize that you are participating in the same Mass. The Mass is offered in English. However, you will notice that the priest, when offering the prayers of the Mass, instead of facing the people, is turned to the crucifix or altar, and during the Eucharistic Prayer, together with the people, is turned to the east, facing the crucifix, the Altar, and the tabernacle, praying to God.

Face the People. Turn to God.

At Mass, there are times when it is proper and expected for the priest and the people to face each other. When? When they are addressing each other and when the Word of God is proclaimed and reflected on.

And there are times when it is proper and expected for the priest and the people to turn to God together. When? When prayers are offered to God. What parts of the Mass?

- the Penitential Rite (prayer of contrition),
- the Gloria (prayer of adoration),
- the Collect (prayer of supplication),
- the Creed (prayer of adoration),
- the Prayer of the Faithful (prayers of supplication),
- the Preparation of the Gifts (prayer of adoration),
- the Eucharistic Prayer (prayer of thanksgiving),
- the Lord’s Prayer (combination of prayers),
- and the Prayer after Communion (prayer of thanksgiving and supplication).

It is good to be attentive to what happens during the parts of the Mass, and to pay attention on how we seek to match them with proper ritual gestures.

*“As a Parish Council member, I try to experience first-hand what we are discussing. My husband and I have attended the Mass *Ad Orientem* two times. I very much enjoyed those masses. I felt a true sense of reverence seeing Father Edison face the congregation when interacting with us and then facing the altar and Christ when praying to God. With the Mass said in English, it is easy to follow along and participate. It seems to be a combination of the Mass I experienced growing up and our current Mass.”*

- Kathy Semmler

What to Do during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Turn to the Lord. Focus on God in the tabernacle – in the tabernacle is the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. And where Jesus is, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are there too. Or, focus on the altar and the Crucifix to help make present the Last Supper and the sacrifice at Calvary. And eventually, focus on Jesus in the consecrated host, his Body, and the consecrated wine, his Blood when the priest shows them to the people.

Pray. Listen and follow the words of the Eucharistic Prayer. The Eucharistic Prayer is your prayer too. In the voice of the priest participates the voice of the congregation – the members of the Church pray through their head, Jesus Christ.

God in the Tabernacle.

Think about the role that God has when we pray at Mass. At Saint Patrick's, we are blessed to have both the altar and the tabernacle on the east of the church!

The fact that we light a candle in the Sanctuary, by the tabernacle, we already acknowledge the unique and real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, reserved in the tabernacle. Our faith in the Triune God enables us to further understand that where the Son is, the Father and the Holy Spirit are there also. It is to this Triune God whom we offer the Eucharistic Prayer – in the Holy Spirit, through the Son, and to the Father.

Consider this. If it were your mother's birthday, would you rather bring the cake and flowers to any of her photographs or would you rather bring your presents to her in person?

What's Happening during the Preface Dialogue?

During the Preface Dialogue, as the name indicates, you would expect the priest to face the people to greet, but he does not, rather he continues to face east. Why? *"Here, too, we have an example of the more delicate sense of form which ancient culture possessed, for once the sacred action is inaugurated, once this God-ward activity has begun,*

*it would be improper to turn away."*¹ The sacred action in this part of the Mass begins at the Prayer over the Gifts and continues into the Preface Dialogue, the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer. The next time the priest turns to the people will be when he announces the Greeting of Peace.

Saying Personal Prayers *Ad orientem*.

Why not? Recognizing God presence in the east – where God planted the garden in paradise (Genesis 1:8) and where Jesus promised to return from (Matthew 24:27) – is a good counterweight to recognizing that God is everywhere – where God fills heaven and earth (Jeremiah 23:24). The east can remind us of paradise and of Jesus' second coming. To wait for Jesus' second coming can help keep our focus as we make our pilgrim journey through the world. To focus on our heavenly destination may help us conduct ourselves properly and worthily day after day.

Be patient.

It is not expected that once one has participated in the celebration of the Mass *ad orientem*, that person has understood it perfectly. If there is one thing that we hope to experience more and more at Mass *ad orientem* is the vertical dimension of worship. This is not to say that Mass *versus populum* does not have this dimension.

Listen to the Mass and the unfolding mystery. What is happening? How do you respond? Where do you encounter God? Where do you encounter the community?

Are there still lingering concerns and/or new questions that you have? Great! You may do your own research and/or you may share these with Father Edison.

*Blessed Virgin and Mother, pray for us!
Saint Joseph, pray for us!
Saint Patrick, pray for us!*

"I attended a Friday morning Mass to experience the Mass ad orientem. I think it is powerful to have Father Edison facing east towards the tabernacle. I believe it links the priest closer to the congregation as we are all facing the same direction and joining our prayers together as one. I'm sure there will be an adjustment period as we all get familiar with the new posture, but I believe it is a positive change."

- Nancy Kolb

¹ Joseph A. Jungmann, SJ, "The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development." Volume II, Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics, p.112.