



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week, I began looking at ways to prepare for Mass: praying through the readings ahead of time, and doing an examination of conscience. Today, I am going to look at more immediate preparations for Mass.

I mentioned the that transitioning from the chaos of our lives into eternal realities takes some time. I remember one person referring to it as transitioning from *chronos* to *kairos*. Both are Greek words that mean "time." *Chronos* means measured time, clock time. This is the type of time you're hyper-focused on when you have a timed test – every second is measured out. *Kairos* means something akin to Matthew Kelly's "care-free timelessness." This is when we spend time with friends and the hours slip by without us noticing – it is "eternal-time" spent with God. So, we have to transition into the eternal moment of the Mass.

This can be done in many different ways, but should begin on the way to the Church (if not earlier). This could be done by listening to holy music in the car (like Gregorian chant, praise and worship, or some other music that lifts your soul to God), by praying alone or as a family, listening to a podcast of the readings for the weekend (as found on [bible.usccb.org](http://bible.usccb.org)), or some other thing that is *different* from your normal car ride.

You should plan your time to get to the Church a few minutes early so that you can spend time praying in the Church before Mass (I get that there are things that sometimes hinder this – a diaper blowout, kids not being able to find their shoes, etc. – but if you plan to be at church at 10:25, but consistently get there at 10:35, you might want to change your plans to get there at 10:15... just saying). It is hard to run into Church and enter the eternal moment. It's good to have some time to change gears, to spend some time in prayer and thanksgiving before Mass begins.

The whole set up of the Church is geared to help us transition. We walk in and have holy water at our fingertips. We dip our fingers in and make the sign of the Cross saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This does at least two things: 1) We remind ourselves of who we are – in baptism, we are adopted sons and daughters of Almighty God, made full heirs to the Kingdom! The holy water is a tactile way of remembering this. 2) We consecrate this time to God, saying all that we do here is being done in the name of the God who is Trinity: I'm entering into this time of relationship with Him (not that we're not always in relationship with Him, but to be mindful of it).

In the Church are images to help us remember that we are entering into eternity – statues, pictures and stain glass windows of God and the saints, a different type of furniture from a home, school or work, a central focus on the mysteries of salvation (the Crucifix). Many churches even have a distinct smell from burning candles and incense. These are ways to help us, through our senses, to focus more on God and His love in this moment.

We then go to our pews. We may make a profound bow to the altar, or genuflect to the tabernacle (which houses the sacramental, real presence of Christ our God). Then we can spend a few minutes praying. What is this prayer? It can be many things, such as the intercessions and petitions we want to bring to God in this Mass, doing a quick examination of conscience and asking God for forgiveness, offering some act of praise or thanksgiving to God, or just being with Him in this moment, offering yourself to Him, asking Him to help you to focus in prayer during this Mass.

Whatever you do, I encourage you to prepare for Mass. This will help you enter into the sacrifice of Jesus with an open heart to give worship to God and to receive His grace.