

The sign of the loaves and fishes has been chosen to illustrate the cover of this leaflet. It reminds us of the story of when people were hungry and had nothing to eat. Jesus was able to take the few loaves and fish that a child had to offer and after he blessed them they became food sufficient to feed very many people.

Pope John Paul has asked that we keep this year – October 2004 to October 2005 – as a Year of the Eucharist. He asks that during this year we remember how Jesus continues to feed his people through the Mass. It is now not with loaves and fish that he feeds us but with bread and wine that, through the prayer of the Church and the ministry of the priest, becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist Jesus shares his life with us, so that we might live life well, in communion with him.

The sign of the loaves and fish perhaps also reminds of the contribution each person makes at Mass. Whether we carry out a particular ministry – for example as a reader, or a server, or a musician or singer – or whether we are ‘just’ an ‘ordinary’ member of the congregation or assembly we all make our contribution. We prepare well and we do the best we can – but sometimes it might feel that we have little to offer.

Yet our contribution is an important part of the Mass. By coming to Mass to listen to God’s Word, to join ourselves with the offering of the great prayer of Thanksgiving, and to receive Christ in Holy Communion we are part of what is taking place. In the way we listen, pray and receive Holy Communion we make our contribution to the worthy praying of the liturgy. Our prayer and we ourselves are received by Jesus and become part of the great blessing that is the Mass.

What do members of the assembly do?

When we come together to take part in the celebration of Mass we gather as a holy people, made God’s own people through baptism. When we were baptised we were anointed to share in the ministry of Christ – and in the celebration of Mass we join with Christ, crucified and risen, in his eternal offering of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father.

Why?

Because God has called us to share in his life, and because we choose to say yes to his invitation.

In the celebration of Mass we have the opportunity of meeting with Christ himself, really and truly present in the liturgy.

- He is present to us in the assembly of the Church. For he promised, when ever two or three gather in my name I am with them.
- He is present when the scriptures are proclaimed
- He is present in the ministry of the priest who presides at the liturgy in the person of Christ himself
- He is present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the bread and wine that has become his Body and Blood.

We come to Mass to be present to Christ – our Way, our Truth, our Life – who comes to be present to us

Preparing for Mass

As with anything a little preparation can make all the difference.

If we arrive at Mass at the last minute, unprepared, is it any wonder if we find that we do not really feel part of things, and that Mass seems not to have anything to offer us.

However if we take some time earlier in the day, or even during the days beforehand to prepare we are likely find that we will have more to put into Mass and therefore will get more from it too.

There are many ways of preparing. Some will prepare by looking at the readings of the Mass. Others will prepare by thinking about what has happened since they were last at Mass; thinking about what the next days will bring – and then bringing these things to God in their prayer at Mass – the things they want to say sorry about, or thank you for, or for help with, either for themselves or others.

O Lord Jesus Christ,
most merciful redeemer,
friend and brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly;
day by day. Amen.

Being a member of the Assembly at Mass

