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Getting More Out of Mass

BY EDWARD SRI, PHD

Do you ever feel you're just going through the motions at Mass? You stand up, sit down, and kneel. You say, "and with your spirit," "amen," and "thanks be to God." You go with the flow in the liturgy, but your mind is somewhere else and you question whether you have a full understanding of the meaning behind the motions.

If we look at the Mass from a biblical perspective, however, things can get very exciting. We'll begin to see that the Mass is not a collection of random prayers, signs, and rituals. Rather, each part is charged with profound meaning. Whether it's making the sign of the cross, or using incense and candles, or praying "Alleluia," "Glory to God in the Highest..." "Lamb of God...", practically everything we say and do in the liturgy is rooted in Scripture. The more we understand the biblical meaning

of these rites, the more we will experience the Mass as a personal encounter with God who, throughout the liturgy, is inviting us to a closer relationship with him.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The opening part of the Mass is all about getting ready. We are preparing our hearts and minds to encounter God in the most powerful way possible on earth. In the first half of Mass, God speaks to us through his inspired Scriptures in the Liturgy of the Word. Then, in the second half of Mass, we actually receive Jesus in holy Communion—his very Body and Blood—in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. This, indeed, is a lot to get ready for!

But we can't simply walk into a church, go through the motions at Mass, and think the liturgy will somehow magically inspire us, change our lives, and make us feel