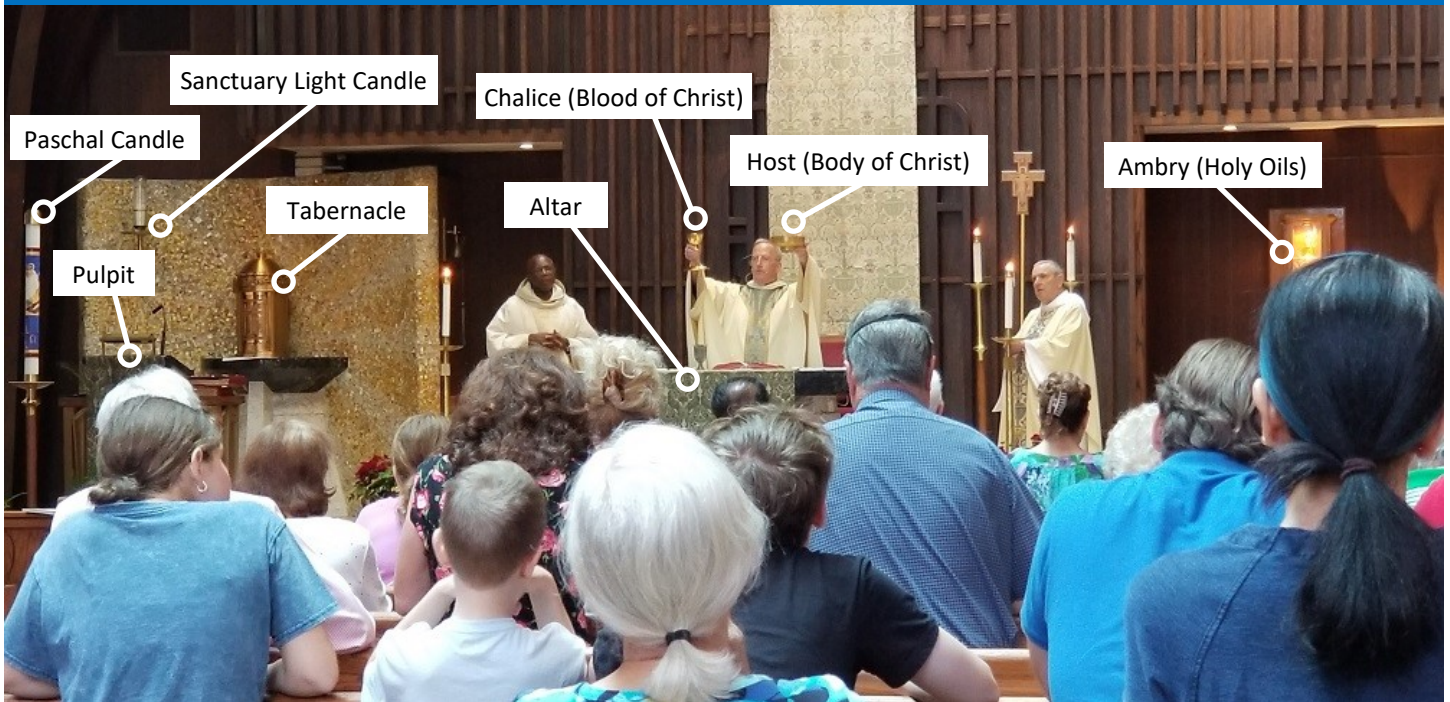


Understanding the Mass

September 2023 Vol. 1



To become better disciples, we all need to commit to learning more about our faith and deepening our relationship with Jesus and Mary. As a community of believers, we continue to seek opportunities to supplement our existing adult formation offerings.

Our latest offering will be a series of monthly articles intended to provide further insights into the teachings and traditions of the Church and the tenets of our faith. This is the first of a series of monthly faith formation articles. This article is one of several about “Understanding the Mass”. In future articles, we will explore the different components of the Mass, their meaning and how they work together to help us encounter Christ.

We encourage you to take the time to reflect on this article as well as reflect on any questions you might have about your faith or topics that we can address in future articles. Even if you feel you understand the monthly topic, please take the time to be open to the Holy Spirit’s intervention to help you deepen your understanding.



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An Encounter with Christ

Before delving into the components of the Mass, we should first of all think about the purpose of the Mass, namely, an encounter with Christ.

We encounter Christ in several ways at Mass:



From the moment we enter the Church, we see that He is present in the Tabernacle (when the candle beside the Tabernacle is lit). In recognition of His presence we genuflect towards the Tabernacle out of reverence.



As we take our pew and observe others around us, we are reminded that Jesus told us that when two or more are gathered in my name I am there in their midst.



When the priest processes into the Church, he is acting in Persona Christi i.e., in the person of Christ. It is Jesus Himself that is conducting the Mass. Jesus is using the priest as his instrument to help us encounter His love.



When the Gospel is carried into the Church, it is held high so all can see the word of God and anticipate what God will tell us during the Liturgy of the Word. We recognize the scriptures as is God revealing Himself to us. He wants us to know Him and enter a relationship with Him.



When the lector reads the first two readings interspersed with a psalm, we are hearing God's words.



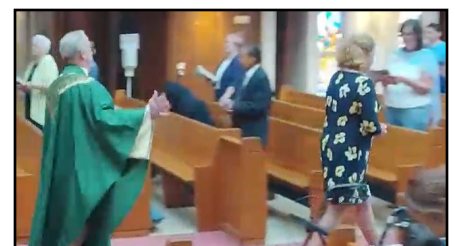
When the priest reads the Gospel and opens the word of God in his homily for us, helping us to be open as the Holy Spirit helps us understand the word, ponder its meaning, and directs us to act. Our response should be to accept the word and reflect on it so it burns in our heart and drives us to action.



With our hearts still burning, we now sit at the Lord's table and break bread with him. It is here during the Liturgy of the Eucharist that we again encounter Christ in the most intimate manner. He is present as the bread and wine becomes His Body and Blood. This is the pinnacle of our faith- the Sacrament of Sacraments. We experience His presence as if we were present at the Last supper.



We receive Him through Holy Communion, and we say the words before we approach the altar. "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word so my soul shall be healed". This is the most intimate encounter, when we are renewed and once again our hearts burn knowing He is with each of us.



As we leave the Church, Jesus is with us. He tells us to Go Forth and Teach all nations and that He will be with us always until the end of the age. He is in our hearts as we ponder His words and know He is really with us as we leave the Church. The Gospel is not carried out of the Church because we now have the words in our hearts, as we commit anew to obey His command to share the Good News.

If you have suggestion for a topic or topics you would like to be the subject of a future article or have any questions on this article please contact us via email at engagingdisciples@ihmparish.net