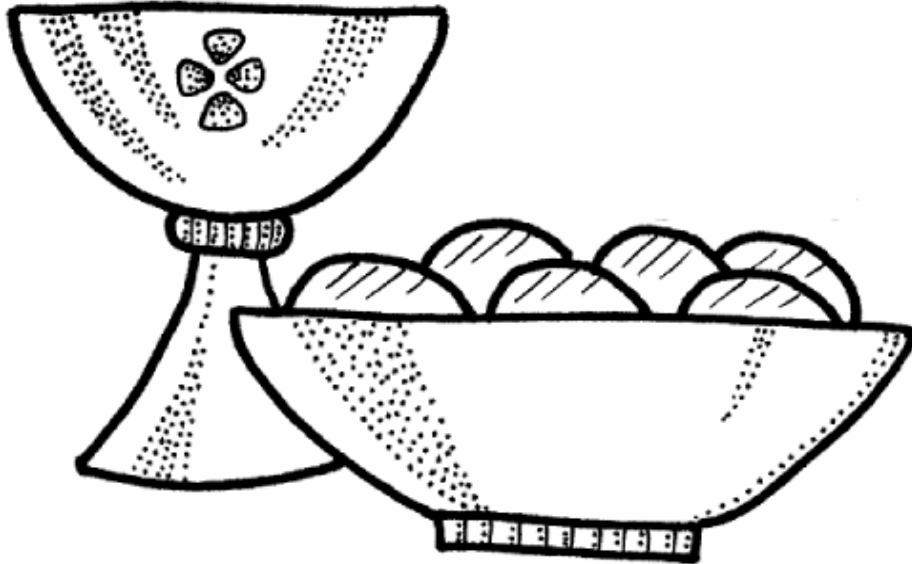


A WALK THROUGH THE MASS.....



Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacle of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia; for a village headman much tempted to return to fetich because the yams had failed; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret; for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman; for Captain so-and-so wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously, by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively, by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonisation of S. Joan of Arc—one could fill many pages with the reasons why men have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfliningly, across all the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to make the plebs sancta Dei—the holy common people of God.

Dom Gregory Dix

Why do we do what we do when we do it??

Before Mass & Preparation

This booklet is intended to look at the Mass and see its scriptural, early church origins; we may discover the rich theology, meaning and purpose behind every prayer, gesture, posture, blessing, and symbol used in the Mass. We begin by looking at our own preparations and the things we do before the Mass even begins.

Sign of the Cross – At St Michael’s we have a “stoup” at the entrance to Church containing holy water. People often dip their right hand into the water and make the sign of the cross. “Holy water” is our baptismal water. Christ commanded his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and to do that with water and the Holy Spirit. The Apostles began the tradition of marking the newly baptized with the Sign of the Cross. It was a seal of the Lord's salvation, given to them at their baptism. In Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us that the first instalment of our salvation was given to us at our baptism, when we were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Genuflection or Bow - For the ancients, it was the custom to go down on one knee (to genuflect) before a king or person of high rank. Many Christians, on entering or leaving Church, will genuflect towards the altar and/or the presence of Christ in the Lady Chapel; often people genuflect when they leave their pew to receive Communion. We kneel before God in worship and prayer. This is what the psalmist expressed in Psalm 95:6: “Enter, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us.”

Personal Prayer Time & Preparation – We have the tradition of preparing our hearts and minds 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start of Mass in order to fully enter into this time of worship. How can one fully appreciate and experience any significant any without proper preparation? We mustn’t rush into the Mass, one or two minutes before or after it begins. Neither should we use this time to catch up with the latest news from our friends (there is a saying...”speak to God before Mass and everyone else after Mass!”). We need to give our hearts and minds time to prepare for an authentic encounter with the most significant Being in this universe.

Lighting Candles – In Matthew 5:14, Jesus tells us “you are the light of the Lord” and we are to shine our light in the world. The light we are to shine to all the world is Jesus himself. From our earliest beginnings, Christians have used candles to remind them of Christ as the Light of the world, and the saints as little lights who have shone the way to Christ. For us, candles symbolise an offering of prayer to God – in St Michael’s we have an area in the Lady Chapel where prayers can be offered and candles lit at any time when the church is open.

Lady Chapel - In the Lady Chapel there are two altars – East and West. When you are in the East end of the Chapel, please remember that you are in the Presence of Jesus in the aumbry. The quiet space at the West end has some prayer aids for use.

Standing & Singing at the Beginning of the Mass - When the bell rings for the start of Mass everyone stands up. You are not standing up because “the priest has entered the building.” No. Standing is the traditional posture of the Christian at prayer: It expresses our

attentiveness to the word of God and our readiness to carry it out. We are up on our feet and ready to get into the moment of prayer and worship, ready for the growth of spiritual knowledge that comes from the Word of God and to participate in Christ's redemptive work in our lives. The ringing of the bell indicates that the service has started and that from this moment, we do things *together* - we are together the Body of Christ and our individuality blends into a corporate offering.

Singing – everyone should be singing. If we cannot sing TO God here in this church during the different parts of the Mass, how can we ever sing OF God to the world?!!! Everyone should be singing. This is not an event you are watching... this is a worship service that demands your full participation!

Vestments – the priest or deacon wears vestments at St Michael's. Vestments have their origin in the ordinary clothes of the first century. They have now taken on a symbolic meaning reminding us of the tradition of our faith and the changeless focus of our worship. Vestments confer an anonymity on the priests that focuses the worshipper on the significance of liturgy and away from the particulars of the individual. They are meant to effectively obliterate the priest's personality. They are also, by the way, meant to be unobtrusive. They should not be creative or clever or call attention to the smart vestment designer or the wonderful seamstress. They are simply to dignify the office of the priest and dignify and beautify the celebration of Mass.

- *Alb* – the alb is the first layer. Alb simply means “white.” In the Book of Revelation 14:9-17, we hear about a great multitude in heaven who wear white robes. The robes were made white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. These men and women are the holy ones who were victorious over sin and made it into heaven. At baptism, we are washed clean of the stain of original sin by the blood of the Lamb. At that time we are also given a calling, a vocation from God. A plain alb is used for Mass in ordinary time, Lent, and Advent but more ornate albs with lace trim are worn for Feasts (such as Easter and Christmas) and Festivals.
- *Stole* – In Matthew 11:29-30, Jesus says “Take on my yoke and learn from me.” A yoke was placed upon the shoulders of oxen by a farmer, so the oxen can do the work of plowing the field – which would then allow the farmer to sow the field and bear much fruit. The stole is a long strip of rich fabric that is worn by both priests and deacons. It is given to them at their ordination and is a sign of their sacramental and teaching authority. It is worn both for the Eucharist and other sacramental services. A priest wears the stole round the back of the neck with the two ends of matching length at the front. A deacon wears a stole across the left shoulder, tied at the right hip. It symbolises service; Christ washing the disciples' feet with a towel.
- *Chasuble* – Chasuble comes from the same word that produces “casa” – which means house; the chasuble is the outer garment of the priest at the Eucharist. Originally it was a cloak rather like a ‘poncho’ but has evolved over the centuries into different shapes all donned through a central opening for the head. The chasuble represents the charity of Christ, which ‘covers all things’. So the priest wears a “house” on their shoulders, the house of God... We call our priests “father or mother,” because they are spiritual leaders of the household of God. They have the responsibility of being the spiritual leaders of the sons and daughters of God.

- *Different Liturgical Colours* – represent the different seasons and celebrations of the church’s year.
 - *Green* = growth and life = Ordinary Time.
 - *Purple* (with blue or violet) = more severe, deeper, serious colour = Advent & Lent. During Advent we wait for the birth of Christ. During Lent we go through difficult disciplines as we prepare for Christ’s death and resurrection. Both are more severe and serious seasons before great celebrations of joy and life. Before we get to victory, there is work to be done & we must be patient.
 - *Rose* = joy. During only two Sundays of the year, one in the middle of Advent and one in the middle of Lent, our Church reminds us to hold onto joy, even as we wait and discipline ourselves. As we reach the half-way mark toward the Incarnation and the Resurrection, the church tells us to rejoice, we are almost there!
 - *White* (and Gold) = victory, purity, ever-lasting life. During the Christmas and Easter season we celebrate the victory that Christ gives to us through his birth and resurrection.
 - *Red* = blood of Christ & martyrs, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost. Feast of the martyrs, the Christians who gave up their lives because of their belief in Christ. Red also is a symbol of the Holy Spirit who fell upon the disciples like “tongues of fire” (red = fire).

Whatever the priest wears the sanctuary wears, so the collars which the *servers* wear, the burse and veil used at the Altar, the High Altar frontal, the lectern, the pulpit falls are all changed according to the liturgical season.

Servers - The altar servers, who are all lay members of the congregation, assist the clergy as they carry out the rites of the liturgy following the sacred cycle of the Christian year. The actions of the serving team have a high profile in the service but paradoxically, as individuals, servers are required to fade into the background so teamwork, anticipation and conformity in dress and conduct are key attributes. Altar servers are privileged to participate at the heart of worship in the sanctuary and to experience the enhanced understanding of the liturgy and spiritual awareness this brings.

Giving – Giving is fundamental to our worship. Firstly of course we have to discover how to give ourselves to what is happening. This means giving attention. For much of our worship we are listening in order to learn. Jesus spent time in the hills in prayer so that he could learn from God, then Jesus would turn up in the market places in order to pass on what he had learnt. So the readers, preachers, intercessors, priests, organists are all passing on to the gathered congregation what they have learnt. We have to give ourselves in concentration and listening. At the Peace, we give our attention to one another, sharing Christ’s peace. A bag or collection plate is passed around the congregation for us to make a financial offering. We give what we can, not what we cannot. We do not tip... we give so that the Church can do its work, care for its paid staff and pay the bills of the building. Each year regular worshippers try to increase their weekly offering to keep in line with inflation. Without the giving of the people, there would be no church.

Introductory Rites & The Liturgy Of the Word

Here we will look at the sanctuary and altar, the introductory rites and the liturgy of the word.

The Sanctuary – After processing from the back of the church and bowing in front of the altar, the priest enters into the sanctuary. Sanctuary comes from the Latin word “sanctus,” which means “holy”. The sanctuary is the place of the holy - the Holy One God. We might say that the sanctuary is the closest to heaven on earth we will get on this side of life, because it is the place that Christ becomes present in the Eucharist. Within the sanctuary are certain pieces of “furniture” we use in our worship of God.

- *The Pulpit* – where the Word of God is proclaimed from the Scriptures. It is usually in an elevated position, because the Word of God should be proclaimed above all other words.
- *Presider’s Chair* – where God’s ordained priest leads the assembly of believers.
- *The Altar* – where the Body and Blood of Christ is made present.

Kissing of the Altar – The priest next kisses the altar. In Old Testament times, lambs and other animals were sacrificed on altars for the forgiveness of people’s sins. The altar is a symbol of the cross, where the Lamb of God is sacrificed, once and for all, for our sins. Therefore, the priest kisses the altar as a gesture of devotion and veneration to Christ who died for our sins. This kiss is also a sign of appreciation for the instrument of our salvation – the cross.

Censing the Altar – In the Anglo Catholic liturgy we engage all our senses in the worship of God. Symbols and signs help us point our minds to the invisible in ways that are richer than words alone. Incense symbolises three aspects of our worship. It signifies the presence of God; it is a symbol of prayer and it is a sign of offering. The rising of the smoke signifies our prayers rising up to God and its perfumed smell evokes a sense of God’s presence- as the psalmist says in Psalm 141 ‘Let my prayer rise before you like incense’. When we cense the altar at the beginning of Mass we are acknowledging it as the focus of our worship, we are gathering where Christ is known. Incense has been used by the Christian church for centuries – it is a link to our past, a connection to God in our present, and a pointer to our future hope of heaven.

Greeting – The priest presides over the liturgy either from a lectern or from the altar. Liturgy means “work of the people. This entire liturgy is our work (participation) in the act of our salvation in Christ. This is a participant “work,” not a spectator sport or show. The priest declares: "The Lord be with you" (see 2 Timothy 4:22). In Scripture these words are a pledge of divine presence, protection and help (see Exodus 3:12; Luke 1:28). The priest might opt to use a different greeting, such as "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you," but this greeting too is drawn from Scripture (see 2 Corinthians 13:13).

Introduction – a segue into the Penitential Rite, introduction of the readings for the season.

Prayer of Penitence – We express our penitence to God and to each other, by praying together “I confess to almighty God that I have sinned in thought word and deed”... Here we

are recalling the two great commandments that Jesus gave to us in Mt 22:37- 39. Love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself.

The Gloria – Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth, (Luke 2:14). The Gloria is meant to externally express what our hearts are experiencing at this point in the Mass. We wish to glorify God because of what he has done for us – forgiven us our sins. During the season of Advent and Lent we omit the Gloria, as a way to anticipate the birth of our saviour and to do penance for our part in his death. We don't sing the Gloria again until he is born and until he has risen, for it is then that we can truly give praise!

Opening Prayer – Collect - The Opening Prayer prepares our minds, hearts, and souls to listen to the Bible readings so that we might receive them like seeds that have fallen on fertile ground that will bear great fruit (see Luke 8:8). The pause at the beginning of the opening prayer is for you...for you to gather your own prayers and petitions and join them to the opening prayer of the church.

The Liturgy of the Word

Over the course of a three-year cycle, a good deal of the entire Bible is read and all the central themes of our Christian faith are covered. Throughout our lifetime, we become intimately familiar with the entire Bible, with the stories of our faith and truths God is trying to teach us. However, hearing the Bible at Mass shouldn't be the only time we study it. Our parish has bible study sessions all year round. With good scholarship being offered in biblical studies, there is no reason why we shouldn't be studying the Scriptures and growing in our faith. Each Sunday we hear:

- Old Testament Reading – We read from the Jewish Scriptures – our OT – because everything that happened among the Jewish people were events and teachings leading up to the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil” (Mt 5:17-19)
- The Psalms– We sing the psalms, because that is how they were composed by the Jews. They were written to be sung or chanted and they beautifully express just about every human emotion in its relationship with God.
- New Testament – The letters of Paul, or Peter, or James or from the Acts of the Apostles. We read them to get a sense of how the early church responded to Jesus' teachings, how they lived and practiced their beliefs.
- The Gospel – We stand. These are Christ's own words. They demand our respect and attention. We lift the Book of the Gospels high for all to see, as we sing our Alleluias – our “Praise to the Lord” for his words of life. The priest (deacon) introduces the Gospel reading by making a small cross with her/his thumb, first on the words of the gospel reading, then a cross on forehead, lips and heart. We do the same, as we all silently pray together, “Lord, be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart – so that I may worthily hear, speak and live your words”.

Homily/sermon - We sit. The word “homily” comes from the Greek word meaning “conversation.” In a family, our parents sit down with us and have conversations with us, to teach us and nurture our growth. Priests, who are our spiritual leaders, also teach and converse with us about God's word for our lives.

Silence – the homily is followed by a brief period of silence, for us to reflect upon the word of God, to take it to heart and consider how we might apply it to our lives.

The Creed - The Creed is a very important part of the Mass. Everywhere around the world the same articles of our faith are being professed and prayed in all the languages of humanity. So, with one voice, in many languages, we stand and profess the same beliefs. For centuries, this has been one of the ways our church has remained united in our beliefs and practices. The multiple parts of the Nicene Creed find their origins in the scriptures, and as statements made by those who were being baptized, professing what they believed. It was formulated in its present form in 325 at the Council of Nicea (in modern day Turkey) and further developed at the Council of Constantinople (also in Turkey) in 381. This creed has been prayed by Christians for centuries as a way to state what we believe about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, about death and resurrection, the Church, and the forgiveness of sins and the life to come

NB: Bowing – why do some people bow when it comes to the part where we say, “... by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man...” ??? We bow because we give special reverence to the Incarnation – when Jesus took on our flesh and became one with us. Similarly, when the Gospel of John is being proclaimed, many people bow or genuflect at the words “...and the Word was made flesh” for the same reason = that we give particular reverence to the Incarnation.

Prayers of the Faithful – Intercessions: We are not just here at Mass for ourselves and our own needs. In the Prayers of the Faithful we pray for needs that are above and beyond our own individual petitions. This is why we also respond together at the end of each one of these petitions: “Lord, hear OUR prayer.”

The Peace - The Sign (Kiss) of Peace - This follows the Lord’s command in Matthew 5:24: “Leave your sacrifice on the altar there, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and make your offering.” We make peace with those around us, who are most likely our family members, the very ones who often hurt the most.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Now we look more closely at what happens during the Liturgy of Eucharist.

The Preparation of the Gifts - The early Christians each brought some bread and wine, along with other food and money, from their homes to the church to be used for the Mass and the works of the Church. “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes” 1 Cor 11:23-26. Today, the priest places the bread and wine on the table, blessing and giving thanks to the Father for the bread & wine. The priest mixes water with the wine and washes her/his hands, as was done at the Last Supper. Mixing water with wine and washing hands are things all Jews did at meals in Jesus’ day.

Censing the Altar - In Psalm 141 the Jews prayed “like burning incense, O Lord, let my prayer rise up to you.” The Jews believed that the smoke of the burning incense was a symbol of their prayers rising up to God. Also, they saw the smoke as a form of blessing God, people and things – such as when the Jewish priest entered into the Holy of Holies each year to burn incense in the presence of God. Therefore, the priest censes the bread & wine, the altar, and the crucifix in order to set them aside as a particularly holy space; the thurifer censes the priest and the congregation – as ways of offering up our prayers and connecting and preparing us all to receive the blessing that God will give us in the Eucharist. After the altar is prepared, the priest invites the people to pray to God that this offering is acceptable to Him.

The Eucharistic Prayer – The earliest written Eucharistic prayer comes from the 2nd century – meaning that Christians were celebrating the Eucharist during biblical times and the earliest copy we have of their prayers outside of Scripture comes from the 2nd century. There are a number of Eucharistic prayers which are authorised by the Church of England. The Eucharistic Prayers bring us to the very heart of the Mass and the heart of our faith. During the liturgy, the priest stands “in persona Christi” – in the person of Jesus Christ himself, offering himself to the Father in the one eternal sacrifice for our sins.

The Preface - Having remembered what God has done for us, we sing together the angelic hymn from the Bible - "*Holy, holy, holy*" (see Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). We join that to the triumphant Psalm sung by those who welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord . . ." (see Mark 11:9-10)

The Institution Narrative & Consecration – The words of Jesus in the Eucharistic prayer comes directly from Scripture (see Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20). At this point, it is worth our time to delve a bit deeper into the scriptural foundations of our belief in the Eucharist.

- 1) Each gospel agrees Jesus was celebrating the Passover meal when he instituted the Eucharist. The Passover was the Jewish feast God instituted on the eve of Israel's flight from Egypt (see Exodus 12:1-28). This is significant, because Jesus is now the New Exodus, releasing us from captivity to sin. Like the blood of the lamb smeared on the door-post of the Jews – which protected them from the angel of death, Jesus gives us his blood to protect us from eternal death. The Eucharist is the New Passover – allowing us to “pass-over” from death to new and eternal life.
- 2) The command to "do this in memory of me" – For the Jews, time was not linear, it was cyclical, particularly when it come to their religious experience and interpretation of time. Thus, for them to “remember” the Passover was not to think about it as only a past event, but literally to make it present, re-member or “re-present” it in their own lives. This is what Jesus was doing and commanding: “Do this in memory of me.”
Meaning: make this eternal act present in your life, here and now. Jesus is not a linear being (not a temporal being) Jesus, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is more...he is an eternal being. Thus his actions, including his death and resurrection are eternal actions, which affect humanity’s past, present and future. When Jesus comes to us in his body and blood, he is truly present as an eternal being in our present time. In other words, we as temporal beings come into his eternal presence when he comes to us in our time.

Epiclesis – The priest places hands over the bread & wine, calling the Holy Spirit to come upon them and make them holy.

Institutive Narrative – The priest takes the bread & wine and literally repeats the words of Jesus at the last supper as he instituted the Eucharist, changing the bread & wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

- Ringing of the bells – 3x each – to call to our attention the moment of consecration. This little tradition comes from a time in the church when folks might have been engaged in their own private prayers during the Mass, when the Mass was offered in Latin.

Doxology – The priest raises the consecrated bread and wine and offers a doxology, a prayer of praise to God in the name of Christ: “Through him, with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever.” Our “Amen” to this prayer acclaims our assent— our “yes” (see 2 Cor 1:20) and participation in the entire Eucharistic prayer.

Agnus Dei - The Lamb of God: In the final book of the Bible, Jesus is called – no less than 28 times - the Lamb: Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, the priest prays: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to His supper." The first part comes from John the Baptist as he identifies Jesus at the Jordan River; the second part is in fulfilment of Christ's command at the Last Supper. Our response to being in the presence of the Lamb of God is to drop to our knees (recognizing his divinity) and to pray: "Lord, I am not worthy, but only say the word and I shall be healed." These words repeat the words of the Roman soldier who wants Jesus healing power (see Luke 7:7).

Holy Communion – Jesus tells us in John's gospel, chapter 6, that he is the bread of life, and says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53–56).

The Final Blessing and Commissioning - Following Communion, there is a period of silence, for us to offer our individual prayers and praise, to reflect upon what we have just received. As long as the elements of the bread and wine remain in our bodies, Christ is present in us in a very special way – through his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity (not just spiritually, as normally throughout our day). This time, therefore, is important for us to savour his presence. Then, there is a final prayer. We are now prepared to go back to the world, where we will live for the coming week. The burdens we have laid down at the feet of Christ in the Eucharist, we must bear gain — but now strengthened by this Eucharist and this community.

The priest then says, “The Mass is ended, our service begins; go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” The first part of this phrase in Latin is “Ite, missa est.” It is what gives the “Mass” its name in English. It means a dismissal,” but also a “mission,” a sending, a commissioning.” Just as Christ said to his apostles on the night of his resurrection, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21),” so we are sent – told to go (Ite) – into the world. You are sent (missa est). Therefore, the purpose of “Mass” is not just to participate in the salvific action of Jesus for our eternal life, but also to be “sent” out into the world with the presence of God to continue the work of Jesus as his disciples.

Conclusion

Worship at St Michael's is in a formal, traditional style within the Anglo Catholic tradition; there is a sense in which both the mystery of God and the friendliness of God are experienced as we use all our senses to engage in worship.

This booklet tries to present a basic understanding of why we do what we do in Church, during the Mass and how the Scriptures, theology, and history relate to what we do. From the first Sign of the Cross to the last Amen, the Mass is a spiritual tapestry, woven with words, actions and even accessories related to the Bible. It employs the total person in worship of God: body, eyes and ears, smell, taste and touch. We address God in words that He himself has given us through the inspired writers of Sacred Scripture. He in turn comes to us- instructing, exhorting and sanctifying us. Everything that we do, the incense, candles, ceremonial, music, use of altar servers, and colourful vestments are expressions of our deep conviction that the Holy is in our midst.

At the last supper, Jesus did something new, something never done before and yet something that would continue from that day until the end of time. He gave us the food of eternal life. He instituted the Holy Mass. This Mass is our means on Earth of drawing close to Christ to live out our salvation in this world.