

## Mass Etiquette: 20 Things To Do And Not Do In Mass

1. **Fast before Mass.** The Church's canon law states that one fasts for at least 1 hour before receiving Holy Communion. Water and medicine can be consumed, if necessary. The purpose is to help us prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
2. **No Food and Drink in Church.** The exceptions would be a drink of water for small children, water for choir members (if discreet) and water for those who are ill. Bringing a snack into church is not appropriate (even for children) because children should learn that we want to set the church apart as a place of prayer and reflection. Discipline is a good thing to teach your children.
3. **Men take your hats off. It is impolite to wear a hat into a church for a man.** While this is a cultural norm, it is one that we ought to follow closely. Just as we take off hats for the Pledge of Allegiance, we do so in church too; as a sign of respect. Women can wear a mantle.
4. **Don't chew gum in church.** It not only breaks your fast; it's distracting; it is considered impolite in a formal setting, and it doesn't help us pray better. Can you imagine seeing Pope Francis popping gum during Mass?
5. **Cross yourself with Holy Water on entering and leaving the church.** This is a reminder of our Baptism, which made us members of Christ's Church. Just try to remain mindful of what is happening when you do so and don't do it without saying a prayer- in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
6. **Dress modestly and appropriately.** Wear your Sunday Best. As Catholics, we believe that God comes down to meet us at every Mass. So, why would we not want to wear our best dress?
7. **Show up a few minutes early.** If for some reason you can't be on time, then try to sit in the back so you don't disturb others. Getting to Mass early allows you to pray and better prepare yourself for Mass.
8. **Cell phones OFF.** Cell phones should never be used in Mass for calls or texting. The exceptions are emergencies (big ones, not everyday ones) and if you do use one, please walk out of church to do so. Also, if you are using the phone for readings or prayers, this is appropriate, but try to be discreet about it. Others do not need to see you using your phone.
9. **Don't sit on the ends of the pew** if you sit down before others. Rather, sit in the middle so others don't have to climb over you. Furthermore - Gentlemen offer their seats to any lady (elderly, disabled, etc.) who must stand. Some churches, like ours, get packed at times. As a Southern custom, men don't sit when a woman is standing.
10. **When we enter and leave Church, genuflect toward the Tabernacle.** Christ is present for our sake. By allowing our right knee to hit the floor, we acknowledge He is our Lord and God. If someone is physically unable to genuflect, then a bow is sufficient. During Mass, if you pass in front of the altar, bow reverently.

**11. Please be quiet while in church** . Once you enter the sanctuary - it is not the time or place to visit with those around you and chat about what your social plans are for the day. If you must talk, do so as quietly and briefly as possible. Please remember that your conversation might be disturbing someone who is in prayer, which is much more important. Sssshhhhhhhh!

**12. Please take loud children to the cryroom** . First, we welcome children at Mass. As I said before, it is a good thing to discipline children to learn what is proper in Church. But every parent knows that sometimes the baby or child is going to have a bad day. Don't make everyone else's day bad as well. Sit on the end of a pew, if you can, and take the child to the cryroom. Don't wait too long before you make a move. There is no reason to be embarrassed about having to quiet your child in the back of the church. It happens. It is worse to allow them to disturb Mass continually.

**13. Prepare your offering before Mass** . Christ tells us not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing when you make your offering. Keeping the basket while you get your wallet out can sometimes become quite a scene.

**14. No bulletin reading during Mass** . Imagine if you invited a guest to your house and before dinner (or during) they decided to read a magazine instead of talking to you. That is what is happening in God's house when you read the bulletin. Please feel free to take a bulletin, but leave the reading for when you get back home.

**15. Respect Boundaries others may have** . You might want to hold hands to pray, they may not. They might be sick and not want to shake during the sign of peace. These are all OK. Do not make any judgment because they worship differently. Please respect others presence.

**16. Bow before receiving Holy Communion.** If it is God, then show your respect with a bow of the head. This is an ancient practice that has continued until this day. Some may choose to genuflect, but please be mindful of those behind you and it is not necessary to genuflect when receiving communion, but only upon passing the tabernacle or entering and leaving church.

**17. Do not receive from the Most Precious Blood of Jesus in the chalice if you are sick.** This is an act of charity and it is not necessary to receive in order to receive the entirety of Jesus' body, blood, soul, and divinity.

**18. Do not leave early.** You are really missing out on the final blessing, when leaving early. We should stay to the end of the recession and the hymn that accompanies it, if there is one. While there are certainly exceptions to this guideline, most who leave early don't need to and ought not to. When at the house of a guest, it would be rude to leave the table when others are still dining. Same is true after receiving communion. A few extras minutes with the Lord is well spent.

**19. Pray after Mass,** if you feel called to do so. It is customary, though not required, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving after Mass is over. Just as we prepare before receiving communion, we should give thanks as well afterward.

**20. Leave quietly.** We encourage you to visit with others, but do so outside of the main body of the church. There are others giving a prayer of thanksgiving after mass, who want to stay and pray. So, please leave quietly and then have the visit afterward outside or in the parish hall.