

A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH
THE MASS

LEADER'S
GUIDE

EDWARD SRI

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A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH THE MASS

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Leader's Introduction

Background and Course Description

About this Study – A Biblical Walk Through the Mass

"[Liturgy is] the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives; he speaks today to his people, who hear and respond. Every liturgical action is by its very nature steeped in sacred Scripture. ... From Scripture the petitions, prayers and liturgical hymns receive their inspiration and substance. From Scripture the liturgical actions and signs draw their meaning."

– Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* 52

This study is a companion to Edward Sri's book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, which takes readers on a scriptural tour through the prayers, hymns, and rituals of the Liturgy. Practically every part of the Mass finds its inspiration in Scripture, as Pope Benedict XVI has noted. Therefore, the more we understand the biblical background to the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, and other prayers in the Liturgy, the more we will be able to enter into all that we say and do in the Mass.

In this study, *The Great Adventure* moves from examining particular books and sections of the Bible to studying the scriptural roots of the Liturgy. After providing a general overview of the Mass, this study devotes a session to each of the major sections of the Mass (the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites). Readings from the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) draw participants into the meaning and background of the prayers and other elements of the Mass. Both the book and the study are based on the 2011 revised translation of the Mass.

Method and Materials

Each session in the *Biblical Walk Through the Mass* study begins with home preparation: Participants read a portion of the book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, and certain prayers of the Mass before delving into the Scriptures and answering questions in the Student Workbook. During each session, class time is divided into small-group discussion time and a thirty-minute video presentation that reviews and explains the material and goes deeper into the meaning of the Mass.

This Leader's Guide contains the Questions and "Talk Outlines" that appear in the Student Workbook, along with instructions for leading the study and facilitating small-group discussions. Recommended Responses to the Student Workbook Questions are included in the Leader's Guide as a facilitation aid.

Materials needed for this study:

- *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* (one copy of the book for each participant)
- *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* 3-DVD set (one set; also available as an audio CD)
- *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* Leader's Guide (one copy for each leader and facilitator)
- *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* Student Workbook (one copy for each participant)
- All participants will also need a Catholic Bible, a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and access to the prayers of the Mass, which can be downloaded from [usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).¹ This study is based on the Revised Standard Version–Catholic Edition (RSV-CE) of the Bible, which also is used in the *Catechism*.

¹ A downloadable PDF of the "Order of Mass" is available at <http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/order-of-mass.pdf>. The "Order of Mass" can also be found in a missalette or publication such as *Magnificat*.

Adding an Extra Session to the Study

The *Biblical Walk Through the Mass* study has five sessions. At the introductory session, participants will receive their materials, get to know others in their small groups, and watch the first video presentation, which will set up the study and provide a basic introduction to the Mass itself.

We suggest you consider adding a fifth session to give participants the opportunity to attend Mass as a group and to meet afterward to discuss how their experiences of the Mass have changed during the course of the study. You might invite a priest to this session to share some of his insights into the Mass, particularly the significance of the scriptural parts of the Liturgy. If you decide to add this additional session, let participants know at the beginning of the study and suggest they keep a list of things that strike them as significant (both in class and while at Mass) so they will be able to share these insights with each other.

Preparing to Lead *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*

1. Planning Your Study

- Register your study at BibleStudyForCatholics.com and receive free leadership support from *The Great Adventure*.
- Gather a core team of leaders to help you pray about, plan for, and implement the program. You also will need one facilitator each group of eight to twelve participants, plus at least one substitute.
- Schedule five meeting times (six, if you are planning to add an extra session) of approximately ninety minutes each. Allow advance time to promote the study, order materials, and prepare facilitators.
- Schedule a two-hour facilitator orientation and training meeting. (A sample agenda follows.)
- Plan promotional and registration details.
- Order needed materials, allowing two weeks for shipping.

2. Promoting Your Study

The most effective way to promote your study is to have your parish priests announce it at weekend Masses and invite participation. Other promotional efforts might include bulletin announcements, posters, flyers, email alerts, articles in local newspapers, and notices in the diocesan newspaper. Register your study on BibleStudyForCatholics.com for free promotional tips and downloadable resources.

3. Setting the Session Agendas

Here is a basic agenda for each session:

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Session Overview
- Small-Group Discussion (forty minutes)
- Video Presentation (thirty minutes)
- Closing and Dismissal

Instructions specific to each week are printed in a shaded box before the start of each session in this Leader's Guide.

Each session should be approximately ninety minutes. Allow time to move to and from the small-group discussion area, particularly if you have a large group or facility. Some groups offer coffee or refreshments before or after the class, particularly on the opening day. You may also want to add extra time for opening

music or for additional questions at the end of the session. (Make sure you have someone knowledgeable on hand to answer questions.)

4. Preparing Facilitators: The Facilitator Orientation and Training Meeting

Materials needed

- *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* study video presentation for the first session titled, “Introduction: Did You Ever Wish You Could ‘Get More’ Out of Mass?”
- One copy of *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* book and one Leader’s Guide for each facilitator.
- Handouts relevant to your class: schedule, contact list, site map, procedures, and small-group assignments

Agenda

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer
2. Orientation
 - a. Introduce the program and tell the facilitators what to expect from the meeting.
 - b. Review handouts and procedures relevant to your group.
 - c. Explain how the study sessions will work.
 - d. Explain what will happen during the first class meeting (see agendas below).
 - e. Show the half-hour video presentation that will be shown during the first study session.
3. Break
4. Training
 - a. Explain the role of the home-study portion of the study:

Prior to each session, participants will prepare at home by reading that session’s Student Workbook material, along with a section of Edward Sri’s book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, and the Mass prayers that correspond to that session (from a missalette). After their reading, they will answer questions in their Student Workbook. These questions will take them into the Bible and the *Catechism* to explore the biblical roots of the main prayers of the Mass.

The Leaders’ Guide contains all the material in the Student Workbook as well as recommended responses to the questions, which facilitators use to prepare to guide the discussion. Facilitators should do the home-study reading and Student Workbook questions in advance, using the Leader’s responses to help them.

Tip: If you and your facilitators desire, you can set a regular time for facilitators to discuss the session and view the video presentation in advance of the meeting.

- b. Review “Facilitating the Session in a Small Group” guidelines on pages viii–ix.
- c. If you did not do so in 4b, explain how you want facilitators to handle difficult questions that are beyond the scope of those in the Workbook. They will often be answered in the talk or in a later session, but not always.

Decide on a plan ahead of time in consultation with your priest or director of religious education. Will you simply ask people to stick to the topic at hand? Will difficult questions be referred to a

particular person? Will you allot time at the end of each class for questions related to the session that came up in the small groups? If your facilitators know the plan, they will be less likely to be thrown off by challenging questions.

5. Close the orientation and training meeting with a prayer.

Facilitating the Session in a Small Group

The role of a facilitator is not to teach—or even to answer questions—but rather to welcome group members and guide them through the session, aiming to give everyone a chance to participate. *The facilitator does not make a discussion good; he or she makes a good discussion possible.*

Preparing the Session

- Do your homework in advance and give yourself plenty of time to complete it.
- After you answer the questions on your own, review the Responses in the back of this Leader's Guide. Make notes of any points you may have missed.
- In your notes, highlight the most important things to bring out for each question. If you found a question confusing or difficult, think of a way to clarify it for your group without answering the question for them.
- Decide which questions are most important in each section and mark them. Also, mark any questions that can be answered quickly if time is short.

Structuring the Group Time

Below is an outline of the session format in the Student Workbook. This outline will guide you in structuring your small-group discussions. The suggested times in parentheses after each section are based on a forty- to fifty-minute discussion period and may be changed to fit the needs of your group. Instructions specific to each week are included in the shaded box that precedes the start of each session).

A. “Establish the Context” (one to three minutes)

Summarize this introduction or ask someone in your group to summarize it for you. This section appears at the start of each session. (In Sessions 1-4, this section is called “Review the Context.”)

B. “Read” (one to three minutes)

Remind the group of the reading assignment, making sure (especially in Session 1) that everyone found the Mass prayers and were able to read everything.

C. “Take a Deeper Look” (thirty to forty minutes)

Go through the Questions in the Student Workbook with your group and encourage discussion.

D. “Application” (five minutes) – optional

Use your discretion on whether to include this section in the discussion. It is primarily a private exercise but can be a valuable part of the discussion if there is time.

Keeping on Time and on Topic

- Start every session on time.

- Set the tone. Be welcoming and enthusiastic. Explain that the group discussion will help fill in gaps participants missed in the session, allow them to share what they have learned, and prepare them for the video presentation. Your goal is to spend sufficient time on each question to accomplish those goals.
- Take control. You are the leader; the group will expect you to move them along.
- Assign someone in your group to keep time. Mark the halfway point and the question you would like to be up to at five or ten minutes before the end of the discussion period, and have the timekeeper tell you when both points are reached.
- Use the markings you made in your Leader's Guide to help you pace the discussion. If time is tight, move through basic questions quickly so you can spend time on meatier ones.

Fostering Discussion

- Watch for clues that a timid person has something to say, and encourage them without putting them on the spot.
- Do not be afraid of silence—but if it continues too long, ask someone to read the appropriate Scripture verse and then ask how it might help answer the question. You may find it helpful to answer the first part of a long question yourself, and then rephrase the question to draw out the rest. Try not to provide the entire answer.
- Kindly “reign in” any participants who dominate the group so that others will have a chance to speak. If they continue, ask them privately to help you get others to participate.
- Gently redirect tangential remarks or questions (“That’s an interesting point, John. Thank you. Now to get back to Genesis—did anyone have anything else to add before we move on?”).
- Ask someone to write down big questions that will not go away or that threaten to take up too much time. After all the workbook questions are answered, go back to them, beginning with those that are most closely related to the session (or handle these in the manner your group leader has instructed).

Leading the *Introduction* – Do You Ever Wish You Could “Get More” Out of Mass?

Session Overview

At this first session, participants will receive their study materials, get to know others in their small groups, and watch the Introduction video presentation, in which Edward Sri sets up the biblical journey through the Mass they will be taking and provides a basic introduction to Catholic teaching on the Eucharist. They will also learn about the format of the study.

You will need your entire core team to be present for this introductory session to help you welcome participants, check registrations, collect fees (if needed), and hand out materials, name tags, and group assignments. At a predetermined time, ask everyone to be seated in the main meeting area.

Leading the Group

Step 1 – Welcome and Opening Prayer (five to ten minutes) Leader

- Dismiss to discussion groups

Step 2 – Small-Group Orientation (thirty minutes) Facilitators

- Welcome, introductions. Ask participants, “What do you hope to get out of this study?”

Make sure every participant has a copy of the book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, and a Student Workbook. They also will need a Catholic Bible (such as the Revised Standard Version–Catholic Edition or the New American Bible), a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (which can be accessed online), and a missalette.

- Explain the home-study assignment for the following week. Participants should:
 - Review the *Introduction* (on pages 1-2 in the Student Workbook and Leader’s Guide)
 - Explain the four parts of each study session using *Session 1* as an example.
 - A. “Establish the Context” places you within the appropriate part of the Mass and introduces the session.
 - B. “Read” contains the reading assignment from Edward Sri’s book and a missalette (point out sections “A” and “B” in Session 1 on page 5).
 - C. “Take a Deeper Look” explores the biblical roots of key parts of the Mass using a series of questions.
 - D. “Application” helps participants apply what they have learned to their own lives.
- Point out the “Talk Notes” on page 3. Participants can use this outline to take notes during the video presentation.
- Return to the main meeting room for the video presentation.

Step 3 – View the video presentation for this session (thirty minutes)

Step 4 – Closing and Dismissal Leader

Introduction

THE MASS

Do You Ever Wish You Could “Get More” Out of Mass?

For many Catholics, the Mass might, in a certain sense, be almost *too* familiar. We show up at church each Sunday and perform prayers and rituals that many of us have known since childhood. We stand, sit, and kneel. We make the Sign of the Cross. We recite, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “Lamb of God,” and “Thanks be to God.”

But what do all these prayers and rituals mean? We might know these rites like the backs of our hands, but do we really understand the significance of all that we are saying and doing in the Liturgy?

One key for unlocking the mystery of the Mass is Scripture. Practically all of the prayers and rituals of the Mass are saturated with the Bible. Quotations and allusions to scriptural passages are found throughout the entire Liturgy. And the climax of salvation history—Jesus’ saving death—is made present sacramentally in the Mass. Therefore, the more we know about the biblical roots of the Mass, the more we will come to appreciate the splendor of the Liturgy and be prepared to encounter Jesus at every Mass.

In this study, we will walk through the main parts of the Mass—from the opening Sign of the Cross to the concluding “Thanks be to God”—and consider them in light of their scriptural background. Along the way, we will discover many beautiful spiritual treasures. For the prayers and rituals of the Mass, when understood biblically, offer much inspiration, encouragement, and practical help for our lives as Christians. As we will see, the prayers of the Mass challenge us to examine our consciences, repent of our sins, and experience God’s loving mercy. They also remind us of God’s presence with us amid our fears, trials, and sufferings. They can inspire us to live our marriages, family lives, and friendships with greater love and summon us to entrust more of our lives to Jesus.

Most of all, this “biblical walk through the Mass” will help us encounter our Lord more deeply in the Liturgy itself. By understanding the meaning of what we say and do in the Mass, we will be better prepared to give ourselves to Jesus in every prayer and gesture in the Liturgy.

What Is the Mass?

Learning more about the Mass is well worth our time and effort. The Mass has been at the very center of Christian worship since the time of the apostles. It is the celebration of the Eucharist that Jesus instituted at the Last Supper. So important is the Mass that Vatican II called it the “source and summit” of the Christian life. On one hand, our entire lives are directed toward the Mass; on the other, we find the spiritual strength, guidance, and support we need to live our daily lives from the Mass.

What makes the Mass so central to the Christian life? The beauty and power of the Mass can be better appreciated when one understands the three chief aspects of the Eucharist: as sacrifice, as real presence, and as communion meal. First, in the Mass, the redeeming *sacrifice* of Jesus on the cross is made present sacramentally so that its saving power may be applied more fully to our lives and we can unite ourselves with Christ’s self-offering to the Father (see CCC 1366–1368). Second, in the Eucharist we encounter the *real presence* of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is not merely a symbol of Jesus. At the moment of consecration, the bread and wine are changed into his very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity (see CCC 1374). Third, not only does our Lord draw near to us by becoming present on the altar at Mass; he even comes to dwell within us when we receive him in Holy Communion. These three aspects of the Eucharist are explained more fully in the two resources accompanying this study: the *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* book and the video presentations.

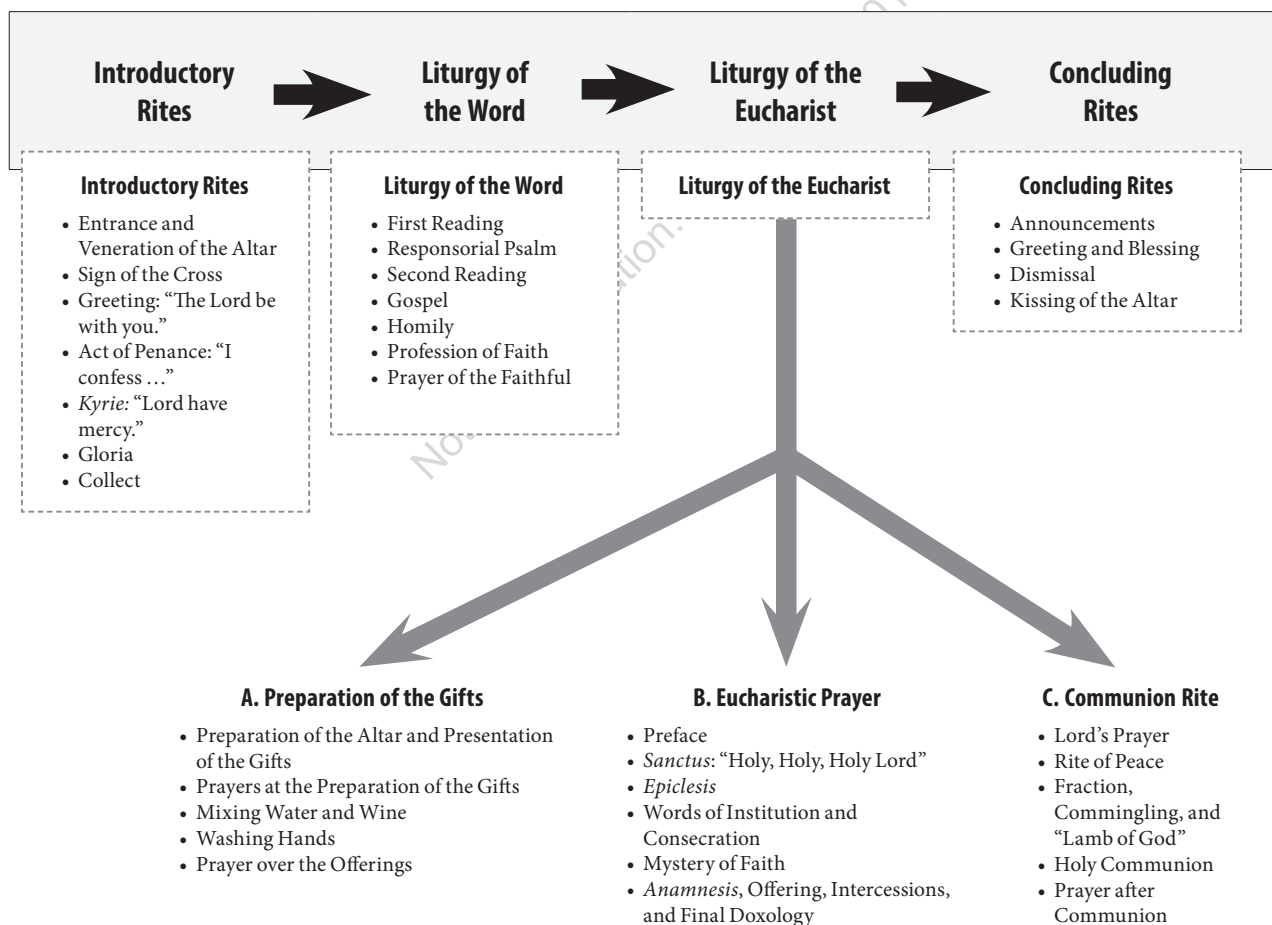
Overview of the Mass

Before we begin our journey, it will be helpful to have a brief overview of the itinerary we will follow, which is an outline of the Mass itself: the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites.

The two principal parts of the Mass are the *Liturgy of the Word* and the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. These two form one unified act of worship. We are first nourished at the table of God’s word through the readings from Scripture, and then at the table of Our Lord’s Body, which we receive in Holy Communion.

These two central parts of the Mass are flanked by two smaller parts: the Introductory Rites and the Concluding Rites. The Introductory Rites open the celebration of the Mass and prepare the faithful for their sacred encounter with God in his Word and in the Eucharist. After Communion, the Concluding Rites formally close the celebration and send the people forth to do good works and take Christ into the world.

The chart below lays out these four main sections of the Mass, which serve as an umbrella for the smaller, individual parts of the Liturgy. Keeping this “big picture” of the Mass in mind will be helpful as we embark on our journey.



An outline of Edward Sri’s video presentations is provided in the “Talk Notes” at the end of each session, with room for you to add your own notes.

Introduction Talk Notes

Do You Ever Wish You Could “Get More” Out of Mass?

A. Outline of this study

B. Key aspects of the Mass

1. The Mass as sacrifice (CCC 1366–1368)
2. The Mass as real presence
 - a. Unique presence in the Eucharist (CCC 1373–1374)
 - b. Meaning of “real presence”
3. The Mass as Holy Communion

C. The Mass as sacrifice: Old Testament background

1. Three aspects of sacrifice
 - a. Sacrificed animal
 - b. Communion meal
 - c. Covenant union
2. Examples
 - a. Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26)
 - i. Symbolism of sacrificial meal: shared life
 - b. Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24)
 - c. Passover
3. Jesus fulfills the Passover sacrifice
 - a. Last Supper: Old Testament sacrificial language applied to himself
 - b. The Passover sacrifice is followed by a meal
 - i. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 10, 11

D. The Eucharist as real presence and Holy Communion

1. The importance of the real presence: John 6

2. The gift of the Eucharist: “You are a tabernacle”

E. Logistics

1. Materials for this study
2. Approach to this study

Leading Session 1: The Introductory Rites

Session Overview

This session explains the Introductory Rites of the Mass, which prepare us to encounter God in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The primary focus of the Introductory Rites is purifying our souls by confessing our sins and asking for God’s mercy. In this session, participants are led to discover the biblical roots of the Sign of the Cross, “The Lord be with you,” the *Confiteor* (“I confess ...”), “Lord have mercy,” and the Gloria.

Leading the Group

Step 1 – Welcome and Opening Prayer (five to ten minutes) Leader

- Dismiss to discussion groups

Step 2 – Small-Group Discussion (forty minutes) Facilitators

- Before you begin, make sure everyone was able to read the prayers for the Introductory Rites, as well as “Part I: Foundations” and “Part II: The Introductory Rites” from *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*. Ask if anyone would like to share any thoughts about the reading or the questions in the workbook (“Establish the Context”). For example, you might ask: “What questions about the Mass would you like answered in this study?”
- Open the small-group discussion in prayer, asking God to open your hearts and minds to understand his word.
- Discuss the responses to the workbook questions for this session. (See “Facilitating the Session in a Small Group” on pages viii-ix of this Leader’s Guide.)
- Make sure everyone has a copy of (or access to) the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which, along with a Bible, they will need to answer the questions for Session 2.
- Point out the “Talk Notes” on page 11, and tell participants they can use this outline to take notes during the video presentation.
- Return to the main meeting room for the video presentation.

Step 3 – View the video presentation for this session (thirty minutes)

Step 4 – Closing and Dismissal Leader

Session 1 Questions

The Introductory Rites

A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH

THE MASS

Introductory Rites → **Liturgy of the Word** → **Liturgy of the Eucharist** → **Concluding Rites**

Elements of the Introductory Rites:

- Entrance and Veneration of the Altar
- Sign of the Cross
- Greeting: "The Lord be with you."
- Act of Penance: "I confess ..."
- Kyrie: "Lord have mercy."
- Gloria
- Collect

A. Establish the Context

Before you begin this session, read "Part I: Foundations" on pages 7-14 in Edward Sri's book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*. Then read through the prayers of the Mass, which can be accessed through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website at [usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).¹ You can also find these prayers in the missalette used at most Catholic parishes or in a smaller devotional book, such as the *Magnificat*. This will give you the "big picture" of the Mass before you zoom in on the details. As you read, think about the following questions:

- What are your first impressions?
- Is there anything in the rites and prayers of the Mass that you have not noticed before?
- What biblical words or images do you notice in the prayers of the Mass?
- What questions about the Mass would you like answered in this study?

In this session, we will focus on the Introductory Rites of the Mass. This is the opening section of the Liturgy that prepares us for encountering God in the Scripture readings and in the Eucharist. We will see how the prayers in these Introductory Rites lead us to examine our consciences, repent of our sins, trust in God's mercy, and praise him for his glory and his goodness to us.

B. Read

Re-read the prayers for the first section of the Mass, known as the Introductory Rites. This will take you from the opening Sign of the Cross to the Gloria and the concluding prayer of this section, called "the Collect."

Read "Part II: The Introductory Rites" from the book, *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pages 17-49.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Answering the following questions will help you understand the scriptural roots of the Introductory Rites of the Mass. If you do not understand something, make a note to bring it up in discussion.

¹ A downloadable PDF of the "Order of Mass" is available at <http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/order-of-mass.pdf>. "The Order of Mass" can also be found in a missalette or publication such as *Magnificat*.

The Sign of the Cross

1. The early Christians saw that the Sign of the Cross was foreshadowed by a mysterious Old Testament sign. For the background to this, read Ezekiel 8:9-18, in which the Lord gives the prophet Ezekiel a vision of the sins being committed by God's people in Jerusalem. What sins have the people committed?

2. Ezekiel tells us that as a result of these and other sins, God's presence will leave the Temple. Babylon will destroy Jerusalem and the sanctuary, taking many of the people into exile. But not all will suffer this fate. Read Ezekiel 9:3-6.
 - a. In these verses, a certain group of people in Jerusalem receive a mysterious mark on their foreheads that protects them from the judgment that will come. In the Hebrew text of the book of Ezekiel, this mark was represented by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*tahv*), which had the shape of an "X" or a cross. What kind of people receive this mark?

 - b. With this biblical background in mind, what might the mark in Ezekiel tell us about the Christian Sign of the Cross? (How are they similar?) For some ideas, review page 22 of *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*.

3. In the Sign of the Cross we call on God's name: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Calling on God's name is a powerful biblical practice.
 - a. Read the following verses. What do they tell us about the power of God's name?
 - i. Psalm 54:1

 - ii. Matthew 18:20

 - iii. John 14:13

 - iv. Philippians 2:9-11

 - b. What might this background tell us about the meaning of calling on God's name in the Sign of the Cross?

The Lord Be with You

4. This greeting announcing God's presence is used four times in the Mass and several times throughout the Bible. In fact, it is often used by God or his angels to address someone who is being called to an important mission.
- a. Read the following verses about the call of three Old Testament heroes, Moses, Gideon, and Joshua. In the appropriate boxes, record the missions they were given, note the obstacles or fears they faced, and note what God said to them in response.

Old Testament Hero	Mission	Obstacle/Fear	God's Response
Moses (Exodus 3:10-12)			
Gideon (Judges 6:14-18)			
Joshua (Numbers 13:32-33; Joshua 1:4-6, 9)			

- b. Do you ever feel like Moses—overwhelmed by life and its demands? What challenges, fears, and obstacles are you facing in your life right now? In light of the biblical background, how might the greeting at Mass, “The Lord be with you,” offer encouragement?

I Confess ...

The next prayer in the Introductory Rite is known as the *Confiteor*, Latin for “I confess” (the first words of this prayer). In it, we express sorrow over our sins—something the Bible calls us to do.

5. Read the following verses. What does the Bible teach about why and how we should confess our sins?
- a. 1 John 1:9
- b. James 5:16
- c. Matthew 3:6

- d. Proverbs 28:13
 - e. Sirach 4:26
6. This prayer also challenges us to consider the four main ways we sin: "... in [our] thoughts, in [our] words, in what [we] have done, and in what [we] have failed to do." Let us examine each of these areas. According to the following verses, what are some of the ways we can sin?
- a. In our thoughts:
 - i. Matthew 5:22
 - ii. Matthew 5:27-28
 - iii. Matthew 6:25-34
 - iv. Matthew 7:1-3
 - b. In our words:
 - i. Matthew 5:22
 - ii. Romans 1:30
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 5:6
 - iv. 2 Corinthians 12:20
 - v. Ephesians 4:29
 - vi. Colossians 3:9

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c. In what we have done:

i. Romans 13:12-13

ii. Galatians 5:19-21

iii. 2 Timothy 3:2-6

d. In what we have failed to do:

Sin is not simply an evil action. James 4:17 teaches that we can also sin by failing to do the good we know we should do. These are known as “sins of omission.” Read Colossians 3:12-15. In this passage, what virtues of Christ are highlighted for us to imitate? Whatever we lack in these and other virtues also is to be confessed.

e. *For personal reflection:* Which of these four areas of sin do you find most challenging? Why?

Lord Have Mercy

7. After confessing our sins in the *Confiteor*, we confidently ask for God’s mercy.

- a. The Hebrew word often translated in our Bible as “mercy” is *hesed*, which describes steadfast, covenant love—a love that is unconditional and totally committed. Read Romans 5:8. In what sense do you think this verse expresses God’s unwavering and steadfast love for us?
- b. One of the greatest examples in the Bible of how to ask for God’s mercy is found in Psalm 51. In it, King David humbly pours his heart out to God, asking for his mercy after having committed a serious sin. Read Psalm 51. What aspects of this psalm do you think make this a model for repentance? Explain.

The Gloria

8. The heart of the prayer called the Gloria tells the story of Jesus Christ, summing up his saving mission, from his birth to his glorious ascension into heaven. Consider the biblical background to the following words from the Gloria and write down in the chart the event in Jesus' life that each points to.

Line from the Gloria	Biblical Background	Aspect or Event in Jesus' Life
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will"	Read Luke 2:14	
"Only-Begotten Son ... of the Father"	Read John 1:14-15	
"Lamb of God ... you take away the sins of the world"	Read John 1:29 and Isaiah 53:7-12	
"You are seated at the right hand of the Father"	Read Mark 16:19	

D. Application

This question will help you apply one of the key themes of the session to your life. After meditating on it, respond to God with a brief written prayer if you choose.

One main focus in this first part of the Mass is on purifying our souls before encountering God in the Scripture readings and the Eucharist. We do this by confessing our sins and asking for God's mercy.

To help you prepare for this rite at your next Mass, take some time to examine your life. Adopt the humble and honest attitude of David in Psalm 51. As you do so, consider the following questions: What areas of your life need to change? Do you live more for success, praise, pleasure, or money than for God? Is there someone from whom you need to ask forgiveness (a spouse, child, relative, or friend)? Is there someone you need to forgive? Do you worry too much about what others think of you? Are you selfish? Do you struggle with greed, anger, impatience, or lust?

After examining your conscience, prayerfully re-read Psalm 51 with those sins in mind or write a prayer of your own, confessing your sins to God and asking for his mercy.

Dear Lord,

Session 1 Talk Notes

Introductory Rites

A. The Sign of the Cross recalls our baptism

1. The words – invoking God’s presence and power
2. The ritual – signifying fidelity, asking for protection
 - a. Ezekiel 8, 9:4 – the *tahv*
3. Importance and power – Romano Guardini¹

B. Opening greeting: “The Lord be with you ...”

1. Biblical perspective: a call to mission, with God’s presence
 - a. Joshua
 - b. Gideon
 - c. Moses (Exodus 3,4)
2. Response: “... and with your spirit” (revised translation)
 - a. Theological emphasis: the Holy Spirit’s unique activity in the priest at Mass

C. Act of penance: “I confess ...” (The *Confiteor*)

1. An examination of conscience
2. “Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault”

D. The *Kyrie* (“Lord have mercy”)

1. St. John Paul II on mercy: an expression of love²
2. Biblical roots:
 - a. Seeking God’s assistance (Matthew 9:27)
 - b. Entrusting others to God’s mercy (Matthew 15:22, 17:15)

E. The Gloria

¹ Quote from *Sacred Signs* by Romano Guardini, translated by Grace Branham (St. Louis: Pio Decimo Press, 1956). The book is out of print but the entire text can be found on the Internet.

² See encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia* by St. John Paul II.