



## The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition

*Donald Wuerl, Mike Aquilina*

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# **The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition**

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**The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition** Donald Wuerl , Mike Aquilina  
**An insightful and practical exploration of Catholicism's most sacred tradition.**

*The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition* is an engaging and authoritative guide to Catholicism's most distinctive practice. And now, with the Church introducing revised language for the Mass, Catholics have a perfect opportunity to renew their understanding of this beautiful and beloved celebration.

With eloquent prose and elegant black-and-white photography, bestselling authors Archbishop Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina guide readers through the different parts of the Mass, from the entrance procession to the blessing and dismissal, capturing the deep meaning of elements that are at once ordinary and mysterious: bread and wine, water and candles, altar cloths and ceremonial books.

Step by step, they explain the specifics, such as the order of the Mass, the vessels used, the unique clothing worn, the prayers and responses, the postures and the gestures. Then they explore the rich historical, spiritual and theological background to each. Prayerful but practical, fact-filled but readable, *The Mass* prepares readers to participate more fully and appreciatively in the sacred rite at the heart of Catholic life.

## **The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition Details**

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# From Reader Review The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition for online ebook

## Richard Grebenc says

In "The Mass: The Glory, The Mystery, The Tradition," Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina collaborate on a daunting task: to give the reader "a 'panoramic' view of the central act of Christian worship" (as stated in "A Note from the Authors"). So much could be said (and has been said) about the Mass regarding its form, history, spirituality, and importance. The authors do an excellent job of condensing, synthesizing, highlighting and weaving together these aspects in a way that is accessible and interesting to any reader regardless of his level of familiarity with Catholic liturgy.

The Foreword of the book is provided by Archbishop Augustine Di Noia who helpfully highlights the authors' use of the present pope's method for mystagogical teaching. If the Mass seems commonplace it can be treated as unimportant. By explaining and unveiling the mysteries of the Mass, the authors help to ensure that the Mass's significance will not be questioned.

Cardinal Francis George, in the Preface, sees as the goal of the book the active participation of the faithful at Mass. It follows then that, in the Introduction, the authors state that their reason for the book is to "understand the Mass as we pray it"; to do this they will provide a "slow walk through the Mass."

Part One, entitled, "What Makes the Mass: People, Places, Words, and Things," begins by exploring the Mass's roots in Scripture and its history, leading the reader to appreciate the Mass today in continuity with its celebration throughout the Christian era. This is followed by chapters that focus on the elements of the Mass: bread and wine, the participants, the furnishings, etc. In addition, the importance of proper preparation for Mass and a Catholic's obligation to attend are emphasized. This first half of the book is particularly rich in clearly explaining Mass-related terminology. Several photographs throughout are useful to bring some of these objects and actions to life. This is especially helpful to those unfamiliar with the Mass, or to those who have been away for awhile.

The second part of the book, "The Mass as It Is: A Closer Look", steps through the Mass from the entrance procession until the dismissal. This section is divided into over thirty bite-sized chapters that deal with every part of the Mass individually. One comes away appreciating the elements of the Mass (e.g., the sign of the cross, the cleansing of vessels) in a new way. This section, like the first part, is enhanced by photographs of the actions of the Mass. The use of photos in this way is in the venerable tradition of Archbishop Fulton Sheen's classic volume, "This is the Mass."

This work is excellent for study and reflection by both individuals and groups. While there are neither discussion questions in the book, nor is there a study guide accompanying the book (hopefully both will be considered for future editions), there is plenty here with which to work. An individual could make his way through the book at his own pace (consider a Lenten devotion: a happy coincidence is that the two parts of the book contain between them forty-six chapters - one for each day from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday). A dedicated group leader or leaders could easily divide the book into parts depending on the number and length of sessions they wished to hold. Supplementary texts listed in the back of the book could be incorporated as well. Particularly helpful would be a discussion leader who is familiar with the upcoming changes (Advent 2011) to the Missal (the changes are the "immediate occasion" for the book, but they are simply stated and not explained). This would be useful for sessions parishes may want to conduct to ease the transition to the new Missal, as well as to revive interest in, excitement for, and understanding of, the Mass.

Also, considering that the Mass is the source and summit of the Catholic faith, this is an excellent resource for RCIA use. The ample use of Scripture (Old and New Testament), the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the documents of Vatican II, and the Church Fathers (notes in the back give references to their quotes) is valuable to all readers, but in a special way to those preparing to be received into the Church or contemplating such a journey.

Considering the extensive use of Church-related terminology, having a glossary would have been a nice feature. This book could well be used as a reference; a glossary would have made it more helpful for that purpose. Nevertheless, this volume's usefulness as a means to understand and appreciate the Mass not only helps the reader personally but prepares him to evangelize and, if necessary, to defend the Mass.

Cardinal Wuerl has a special gift for catechesis and his ability to weave the spiritual dimension into his instruction is evident throughout the book. The latest edition of his classic work, "The Teaching of Christ," is referenced to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and would be a great companion volume to "The Mass." Anyone who is familiar with "The Teaching of Christ" or has been privileged to see his television series of the same name knows firsthand his gift for teaching the Faith.

Mike Aquilina has an impressive corpus but is best known for his work on the Church Fathers. His excellent "The Mass of the Early Christians" is a must read for anyone who wants to go further in understanding the roots of the Christian liturgy. In the present volume, the extensive use of quotations from the Fathers shows his obvious influence on the text.

In an interview just days before receiving the red hat, Archbishop Wuerl hoped that "now [...] there may be those who would be persuaded to listen more carefully" to his proclaiming the Gospel, teaching, and passing on the faith. This partnership with Mike Aquilina is an excellent beginning.

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### **Cheryl Scott says**

Won this in first reads! Yay!

This book is a welcome addition to the Roman Catholic shelf of my library.

It is a straightforward and solid reference on the elements of the Roman Catholic mass. I will add it to the short list of recommendations I offer anyone who asks me about the mass, its history and its meaning, along with 'The Lamb's Supper,' by Scott Hahn, and 'The Mass of the Early Christians,' by Mike Aquilina (a co-author on this book, as well.)

'The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition" is not quite as engaging as any of the books by Hahn (who is in a class by himself), but it is direct and reliable.

4 Stars.

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## **Stuart says**

The Mass is the first in a series of books by Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina which highlight key aspects of what make Catholics, well, Catholic. The book begins with a brief introduction on the Mass as being something we do. It is not merely some event we show up to observe but an active prayer we participate in fully. The book is divided into two parts. Part One highlights origins, history, and items used at Mass. Part Two walks us through the entire Mass part by part from the Procession to the Dismissal.

What I found the most fascinating in Part One was the history of the Mass. We all know that this Eucharistic celebration has its origins at the Last Supper. Historical aspects the normal Catholic doesn't know, e.g., the standardization during the Middle Ages, are BRIEFLY covered in this chapter. I wish there had been more pages devoted to the history of the Mass. However, I appreciate the authors acknowledging that it is impossible to cover the history in a few pages, let alone a few volumes, but I wish they would have suggested some further reading on this matter.

As opposed to picking a favorite chapter in Part Two, I picked a slew of them. To be more specific, I really enjoyed the chapters that focused on the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which starts with the Offertory and ends with Holy Communion. This part of the Mass was one that I always wanted to understand and appreciate more, and this book definitely helped me grow in understanding. I got to read some of the prayers the priest says quietly over the chalice and when washing his hands. It was also interesting to note that when priest mixes the wine and water, it used to serve a purpose but now has several symbolic meanings, including the union of divine and human and the water and blood pouring forth from Christ's wounds.

This book is the perfect introduction to learning about the Mass and would make the perfect gift for people in RCIA or revert looking to rediscover their Catholic faith. It is also a good read for faithful cradle Catholics just looking to deepen their love and understanding for the Mass. I believe it would also make a great gift for seminarians or new priests, though I'm sure veteran priests would enjoy it too. Basically, what I'm saying is that this book is a benefit to everyone. Once you get done reading this one, you should check out the sequel *The Church*. Hopefully, there will be a third book in this series in the near future.

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## **Nadine says**

### **Informative & Easy**

this is a short and easy intro into why catholics do what they do during mass, what every thing in mass is done for and why. mass is beautiful & this little intro is a great way to get a tidbit of the years of traditions that built the centre of the Catholic faith.

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## **Pat Murray says**

This was an excellent book explaining the Roman Catholic Mass. It covers the history, prayers, scriptural references in regards to parts of the Mass, and Tradition of Mass. It is written by one of today's leading educators on Roman Catholicism, Archbishop Donald Wuerl. He writes at a level for the common person trying to educate themselves about their religion. It will give practicing Catholics a new zeal for Mass, hopefully entice fallen Catholics to return to Mass, and shed light for those who do not understand the

beauty, depth or richness of worship in the Catholic church.

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### **Haley Keller says**

This book is an excellent guide to every single part of the Mass. The book is divided up into each of the sections of the Mass, and each part is explained. Not one part of the Mass is left out, and the book is very easy to read and informative.

I found the book to be entertaining, and it wasn't the slightest bit boring. Even though I've been Catholic my entire life, I still found the information in the book to be very informative, and it was interesting to learn more about the Mass. I think this book is excellent for anyone who is interested in learning more about the Mass. Both Catholic and non-Catholics can learn something from this book, and it is written in a way that is open to both groups of readers. It is a great resource for learning about the Mass that isn't as formal as many other books on the Mass. I think it would be an excellent introduction to the Mass for anyone who doesn't know much about it and wants a good starting point to learn from.

The book goes into every detail of the Mass, but it does so in a way that isn't overwhelming. I was surprised at how simple the book was, even though it is packed full with information. I think a lot of that has to do with the easy to read writing style. I haven't read many books all about the Mass, but I really enjoyed this one. If someone wanted a recommendation on a book about the Mass, then I would highly recommend this one. I thought it was a great book for anyone that wants to learn more about the Mass or Catholicism in general.

<http://hmweasley-blog.blogspot.com/20...>

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### **Kari says**

An excellent and approachable explanation of the Catholic Mass. Perfect for Catholics who want to better understand the Mass and its deeper meaning. *The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition* is also well suited for people of other faiths who want to understand how and why Catholics worship the way they do.

"What we do is a consequence of what we believe."

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### **Laurie says**

A GOOD AND READABLE PRESENTATION OF THE CATHOLIC MASS WITH A STEP BY STEP EXPLANATION ABOUT EACH SEPARATE PART. YOU REALLY SEE THE 2000 YEAR OLD HISTORY OF THIS CELEBRATION - HOW, WHERE, WHY IT ORIGINATED AND CONTINUES TODAY. THIS IS A MUST READ FOR CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS. ALSO A GOOD READ FOR ADULTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY ARE CELEBRATING WHEN THEY GO TO MASS.

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### **Delphia says**

I didn't find religion but my interest in Catholic traditions is somewhat satisfied. I have always found the symbolism behind Catholic ceremonies fascinating and this book was informative, especially with there being a new pope. I don't think I will convert but I am pleased to have won this as a first book.

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### **Brandon Schild says**

A great book on explaining the mass.

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### **Jennifer Wilson says**

Cardinal Donald Wuerl's book The Mass is a 212 page volume which delves into the mysteries we encounter each week as we head to church. Each part of the service is examined in depth from preparing for Mass to the dismissal. The people and other parts of the service are discussed, such as explaining the function of the cantor. Also, parts of the church are mentioned, such as the Tabernacle. Even the vestments are explained.

This is a fantastic book for those who are new to the Church. One thing I particularly enjoy about Cardinal Wuerl's style of teaching is he starts at the basics, but it's in a style that no one feels talked down to when he is explaining something. Even when you think "I know that", his wonderful style is such that you will still gain something new from enjoying this book.

This book also has a number of photos so you aren't guessing as to what is being discussed. In the chapter "The Great Amen", the chalice and paten are mentioned as being elevated, and there is a photo of Cardinal Wuerl doing just that — what better way to know exactly what is being taught as by seeing it.

As Catholics, Mass is just what we do. But WHY do we do it? This book delves into that, and not only is it an informative book, but one that could easily be a springboard for mediation as the meanings behind the rituals are explained. For example, making the sign of the cross at the beginning or the end of a homily is a way of asking God to help us make the message real in our hearts. (While not all people do this, I found this example to be especially interesting!) So many times things become habit rather than meaningful. I would highly recommend this book to any Catholic to try and bring the original intent of each ritual back into the forefront of your mind, and hopefully you will enjoy Mass as never before.

FTC disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher to review. All opinions are my own.

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### **Charles says**

This would be a suitable book for someone who doesn't know much about the Catholic mass, or someone preparing for confirmation. While I'm no scholar, I found not much to chew on because it doesn't move much beyond the basics. It's a lot of what and not a lot of how or why. The pictures reminded me of the

Catholic picture books children read in the pews. Cardinal Wuerl looks way more comfortable and personable in the flesh.

It's just not very deep. There's a fair bit of controversy around this new translation of the English mass that debuted for Advent 2011, and the book doesn't even attempt to address it. Who messed with the Creed and the Eucharistic prayer? Why? There's a real lack of attribution surrounding that process that I'm still curious to uncover. Somewhere there are answers to those questions, but not in this book. There's even more controversy surrounding the imposition of the mass in the vernacular post Vatican II, but that's not explored either. Reading this book you could be forgiven for thinking not all that much happened between the Last Supper and what you'll find at any Catholic Church on Sunday.

Cardinal Wuerl is the archbishop of Washington DC where I heard him say many a mass. He gives an intelligent and thoughtful sermon. Mike Aquilina is evidently a Catholic author of some renown. With both of their names on the cover I expected better, but this book didn't satisfy.

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### **Julie Davis says**

Any Catholic knows that the Mass is the heart of our Catholic life and identity. At the most basic, it is communion in the Eucharist, the bread of life which is Christ's body. Everything else that we are comes from that. Most Catholics know the basics of the Mass so well that they could go through them in their sleep.

Therein lies the problem.

In the first place, we may know motions, gestures, liturgical responses, and more, but we often don't know why we are doing these things. If we do understand why, there often is an even deeper meaning that escapes us. If you are a newcomer then you are in the dark about what to do during Mass until you pick it up by watching those "in the know"—who often may not be able to explain why things are taking place.

Secondly, the well-known liturgy of the Mass is going to change in November when the new translations will be put into effect. What is changing and why are key issues to helping everyone get the most out of the new liturgy.

The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition is designed to act as a primer about the Mass. It begins with a brief description of the Mass's origins and history, followed by an indepth look at all the steps, from procession through dismissal. The authors are at pains to describe the process on two levels. First come the essentials of what actions are being taken (the priest prays, the people respond, etc.). To that effect, they include photos of the priest during different moments of the Mass. Descriptions are given of who all the roles of those celebrating the Mass, the church furnishings, books used, clothing, vessels and more. On a deeper level, they go into why the actions are being taken, both on symbolic and spiritual levels. The excerpt which closes this review gives an idea of how skillfully these are blended.

The Mass is also where you may find the changes in the liturgy described and explained to show how they more fully reflect the mysteries in which we are taking place. Often this is not called to our attention as a change, but is contained within the explanation just before or after the liturgical words. This is done matter-of-factly, without polemics.

I know more than some about the Mass. As a convert of 11 years ago, I dug deep and was fascinated by the symbolism. Reading The Mass, I was reminded of things that I had forgotten and, indeed, learned new information as well. It was inspirational and reminded me of the depths that the Catholic faith has to offer anyone who will take the trouble to look below the surface.

I love Mike Aquilina's writing. The Mass is no exception. Aquilina can take the most basic, matter-of-fact information and show us the spiritual element that makes it come alive. It is his touch that we see throughout the book which makes it an inspirational as well as informational work.

Add to Aquilina's writing chops is coauthor Cardinal Donald Wuerl. I was told that his mere presence as coauthor made an imprimatur unnecessary, according to whatever authorities the publisher contacted (seems dicey reasoning to me for future generations who may read this, but there you go, that's what they told me). It results in accuracy and clerical insight as well as spirituality that you can trust underlying the explanation of the Mass.

It is not a perfect book. A few things caught my attention that were small, but noticeable:

- \* It seemed to me that some elements were needed for consistency's sake. Several times the text goes to the trouble of informing the people to stand, for example, and yet never instructs on when to sit again.
- \* Although the church furnishings are described, no mention is made of saints' statues, votive candles, stained glass and the like ... all the items that every Catholic church contains, no matter how ancient or modern the architecture.
- \* Some variations which are allowed for in various rituals weren't mentioned. I imagine this may have been because they aren't commonly used. For example, our church retains the altar rail which is where communion is given. Practically everyone chooses to kneel for communion. Naturally anyone may stand who chooses to do so. However, altar rail or no, the book makes no mention of protocol for those who may desire to kneel for communion.

Those small things aside, believe me when I say that this book is one to recommend for anyone who wonders why we "do those things we do" in Mass. Indeed, it would be a good book to read to remind us of just what depth we are offered every time we attend Mass. Highly recommended.

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### **Diana says**

An in-depth look at the history and meaning of the parts of the Catholic Mass.

This is a very thoughtful and interesting look at the Mass, giving a lot of great insight into why Catholics do what they do. The language is easy enough to understand for laypeople, and pulls in from Scripture. One thing that surprised me was the use of the new liturgical translation, which has not yet been implemented in the United States. However, it was a great introduction to the new translation.

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### **Rick Gingrich says**

This book was very thoughtfully written, with wonderful explanations of the Catholic mass. As a protestant, I found the book intriguing and engaging. It was a great overview of the actual rite of the mass, but also

delved deeper into why the mass is celebrated the way it is, and how central it is to being a Catholic. I was challenged to reexamine my own faith and beliefs in the light of thousands of years of christians celebrating the mass. Very insightful.

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