



## WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

This is part 2 in a series on how to attend Mass, to get more out of coming. To review, here were the six bullet points from last week: Holy Water, Genuflect, Say a Prayer, Pay Attention! Sing! Respond.

As you are aware, the Mass has two major parts, the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is helpful to know the different parts of the Mass and what they mean. That is part of your homework assignment, but for this series we are only considering some practical points regarding participation. Last week, we thought mostly about general principles for preparation and active participation. This week has more to do with getting more out of the parts of the Mass.

7. Find a word in the Word. Over the years, it has been said that Catholics don't read the Bible. Actually, we listen to three readings from the Bible every weekend. So, over a year, attending Mass each week, you will have read passages from many parts of the Bible. However, Mass is not Bible study. That's done at other times. Mass is an act of worship, and reading Scripture is part of that act and prepares us to do so more fully.

One concrete exercise that you will find helpful is to read the readings ahead of time. Then, when they are read at Mass, you will already be familiar with it. The second suggestion is to look to find one word, one thought, one image that strikes you as the passages are read. If you are really paying attention, something will hit you, after all the Holy Spirit is working in you to help you learn something.

Besides looking for one idea that comes to you, you can also imagine that if you were giving the homily at Mass, what would you say? That challenges you to ask yourself what you think the message is. And, it's important to remember that this message is not for everyone else, but for you! In other words, ask yourself, "What is God trying to tell me this week?"

8. Use your imagination. One of God's gifts to us is our imagination. We can use it for daydreaming, or to be creative. We can also use it for prayer, especially at Mass. When we are at Mass, there is so much happening, which we cannot see with our physical eyes. We can use our imagination to experience what is actually taking place. Here are three examples, and, of course, there are many others. 1. First, you can imagine what it would be like to be at the Last Supper. As the altar is prepared, think of the apostles preparing the meal. As the celebrant says the words of Consecration, imagine Jesus saying those words as He gives them, first the Bread, and then the Wine. 2. At every Mass we are present at the Crucifixion. Imagine being right there, hearing the sounds, seeing our Lord on the cross, His mother standing there. Sometimes, after elevating the Host, I think of Jesus being taken down from the cross and I say a prayer to the Lord that as we take Him down from the cross, we are also taking Him into our hearts. When I hold up the Chalice, I imagine catching every drop of blood that Jesus shed. 3. Also, when we attend Mass, we are literally at the edge of Heaven. I imagine all the Angels and Saints joining us around the altar. I sometimes think of the roof of the ceiling being open, like an open dome stadium, and see the faces of loved ones who have died, and others, looking down to be a part of the Mass. Yes, use your imagination to fully experience the power of the Mass. There are so many possibilities and opportunities. I guarantee you that the Mass will come alive for you like never before.

9. Emphasize different words. One trap that we can fall into that prevents us from fully appreciating the Mass is that it is repetitive. We say many of the same words each week. There are many reasons for that, but something to try is emphasize different words in those prayers each week. Here are just two possibilities. 1. Each week we begin with the Penitential Rite. We say, "Lord, Have Mercy." Each week, we can emphasize in our minds a different word. One week we can concentrate on "Lord," remembering that we are calling out to Him. The next week we can think of "Have," making a prayer, a plea. Finally, we can then emphasize "Mercy," God's forgiveness and healing touch we so desperately need. The other example is from the words of Concentration. One week we can emphasize, "This," getting you to focus on the power of that moment. Another week, emphasize, "is," realizing the reality of Transubstantiation, proclaiming your faith in the Lord's presence. Finally, you can think of, "Body." In that moment, Jesus is fully present to us--the same Jesus born in Bethlehem; the same Jesus who taught on the mountain; the same Jesus who died on the Cross; the same Jesus who rose from the dead.

When you approach the prayers at Mass in this way, you will soon realize there is a boundless depth and wealth to the Sacrifice of Mass. It can make you look forward, with excitement, to the next Mass. Imagine that. You can't wait to go to Mass again! More next week...

*"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.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)*