



A visit to Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Leicester

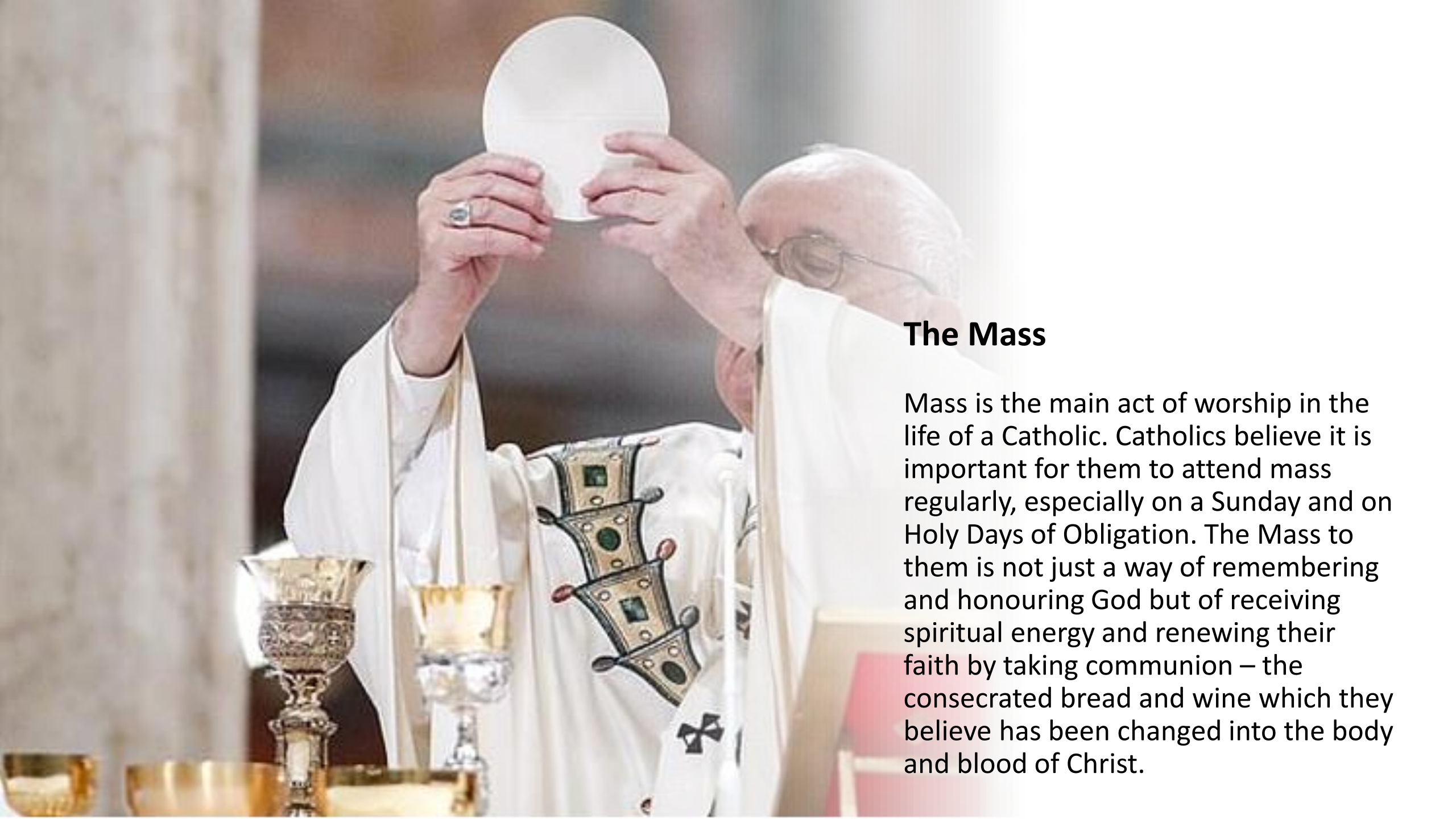


Catholicism

Catholicism is one of the three major branches of Christianity, along with Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism, all of which worship the Christian God, who they see as being the Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Catholics have their own set of beliefs that differ from some other Christian denominations.

Catholics believe that the Pope is a direct successor of St Peter – one of Jesus's original apostles – and therefore accept his authority; they believe that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ during Mass (transubstantiation); they believe that the sacrament of confession is important for the forgiveness of their sins; they believe that Mary is the Mother of God and Jesus is the Son of God.



The Mass

Mass is the main act of worship in the life of a Catholic. Catholics believe it is important for them to attend mass regularly, especially on a Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. The Mass to them is not just a way of remembering and honouring God but of receiving spiritual energy and renewing their faith by taking communion – the consecrated bread and wine which they believe has been changed into the body and blood of Christ.



The altar

The altar is usually located in the sanctuary of the church. It is a table on which a copy of the Bible and the consecrated bread and wine are placed during the Mass. Cloths are used to cover the altar; candles and a cross are placed on or near it. The altar is a focal point of the Mass as the church community, under the leadership of the priest, give thanks to God and remember his love for them.

The tabernacle

The tabernacle is a special container found near the altar in the church. After Mass, any consecrated bread which has not been used is stored safely inside. Catholics believe that Christ is present inside the consecrated bread.



The tabernacle lamp

If consecrated bread is inside the tabernacle, the tabernacle lamp will be lit to let the congregation know that Christ is present. The lamp will burn continuously unless the tabernacle is empty.





If the tabernacle lamp is lit, worshippers will genuflect by bending one knee to the ground in worship when they approach the altar or before sitting in one of the pews.

Statues

Statues feature prominently in the Catholic Church. They serve as reminders of key events, beliefs and individuals in church history.

Statue of Mary with infant Jesus

The Catholic church holds Mary the Mother of God in the most highest regard and places her above all Saints. Catholics do not worship her as a God but they will pray to her and ask for her to intercede if they need help or consolation – they venerate her, meaning they show respect and reverence.

They regard Mary as a spiritual mother to everyone and believe her maternal love is one of the greatest gifts given to them by God. They view her as a role model of faith, love and charity.

Mary is often referred to as “Our Lady” by Catholics.



AVE MARIA

Sacred Heart Statue

The sacred heart of Jesus is viewed by Catholics as a reminder or a symbol of God's never-ending love, the love Jesus had for his Father and for us, the willingness that Jesus had to lay his life down for mankind.

It is an object of devotion for Catholics - they pray to the sacred heart of Jesus to focus their hearts on receiving and returning his love with gratitude.





Ascension

After Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, he remained on Earth for a further 40 days before he was lifted into the clouds to return to God the Father in heaven.

This event is known as the Ascension.

*Two men then appeared clothed in white robes and asked why they were watching the heavens. They said **“Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”***
(Acts1:11)



The baptismal font

The baptismal font holds water used for baptisms. It is usually found at the back of the church, near the entrance doors. This serves as a reminder to the congregation that they enter the family of the Catholic Church through the sacrament of baptism. Some newer churches place the baptismal font in the centre of the church – this serves to remind the congregation that, through their baptism, they are taken into the heart of the church family.

Baptism is the first sacrament to be received when joining the Catholic Church. Roman Catholics believe baptism should be carried out as early in a person's life as possible and many Catholics are baptised when they are very young.

The stations of the cross



There are 14 stations of the cross. Each one depicts a point in time during Jesus's journey to Calvary on the day of his crucifixion and death. Worshippers move from one station to the next, saying prayers and reflecting on each one.

This happens mostly during Lent and Holy Week, especially on Good Friday, when Catholics take time to remember the suffering Jesus went through on their behalf.



The Confessional

The confessional is a place where the priest listens to individuals as they confess their sins. Confession is a sacrament which Catholics believe cleanses their soul, strengthens their will and brings them closer to God. They believe they must do penance and make amends for their sins.

Vestments

A priest's liturgical vestments are worn during the Mass and other celebrations and events. There are five main colours of vestments which are worn throughout the year.

White - represents innocence, purity, joy, triumph, and glory - you will see this colour during celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, All Saints' Day, and marriage ceremonies.

Red - represents passion, blood, fire, God's love, and Jesus' suffering. It is most typically worn on Palm Sunday, Pentecost and when the Sacrament of Confirmation is performed.

Green - represents the Holy Spirit, life, eternity, and hope. This colour vestment is worn on most Sundays

Purple - You will see this colour on Sundays of Advent and Lent, and whenever a priest performs the Sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Sick.

Black - worn at all Requiem Masses and at the Good Friday Liturgy. This colour is, traditionally used for funerals, although some priests prefer to wear white, especially when the funeral is for a young child.



Additional resources

Sacred Heart Catholic Church's website:

<https://sacredheartchurchleicester.co.uk/>

BBC Bitesize – Catholic Christianity:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zv
hkscw](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zv
<u>hkscw</u>)