

Ave Maria Catholic Church



Etiquette at Mass

“We participate reverently in the Mass”

The basic practice and lesson of how we should conduct ourselves inside the Church is summed up best by the Second Council of Lyons, AD 1274: *“It is fitting that He whose abode was established in peace should be worshiped in peace and with due reverence ... behavior inside should be calm, pleasing to God, bringing peace to the beholders ... Those who assemble in church should extol with an act of special reverence that Name, which is above every Name ... In churches, the sacred solemnities should possess the whole heart and mind; the whole attention should be given to prayer.”*

(Revised: 12/29/09)

General: “Etiquette” concerns good habits that will enhance liturgy for all of us. This handout contains helpful suggestions or reminders intended to help parishioners at Ave Maria Parish develop habits, which make our community worship rich and prayerful. We can all contribute to a positive worship experience by cultivating good parish etiquette. By preparing and participating in the liturgy in a positive manner, we speak to the importance and value liturgy has for us in the Catholic faith.

Attire: When we come to church liturgies, our dress code should be our “Sunday best”. Dressing for Mass is simply a matter of showing proper respect, not only for God, but also for our brothers and sisters around us. One should always wear clothes that are modest, and if, possible, all things being equal, clean and the nicest clothes we have. Some general guidelines for proper attire include:

- **Shorts & Sweats**: Just say no.
- **Hats or Caps**: Better left outside.
- **Blue Jeans**: If jeans are all you have, *nice* blue jeans can be “ok”.
- **Ties and Jackets**: Although desirable, if you have no suit or jacket, then come in the best that you have.
- **Cell Phones/Pagers**: Turn them off or leave them in your car.

Etiquette: During the Mass, we are at the foot of the Cross, witnessing the real-life activity of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Our conduct, demeanor, gratitude, and reverence throughout the Mass need to be appropriately directed to Christ—without creating distractions to those worshipping around us.

Keep sacred silence in the Church. Please avoid unnecessary conversation and keep necessary talking to a very low whisper. Greet newcomers, friends, or relatives outside the worship area or in the narthex, so as not to interfere with the meditation or prayer activities of those around us.

PLEASE try to be on time for Mass! Sometimes things can’t be helped, without doubt—cars break down, babies need changing, etc. – but chronic lateness to the Mass is often disruptive and disrespectful.

Children: First and foremost, children are always welcome at Mass. We ask parents to be clear with their children about their hopes and expectations of their behavior in the church during the liturgy. Reward good behavior and let the children know how proud we are when they are well behaved.

Children sometimes can’t help making a bit of noise at Mass. If your child

becomes unruly, out of control, or disruptive enough to distract those around you or makes it hard for others to hear or prayer, PLEASE take them to the Narthex, the “cry room”, or outside. Be sensitive that an acceptable level of noise to you as a parent, might be one thing because you are so used to hearing your children and you may take their sounds for granted; others might find that same noise very distracting. And, please, don't let your children kick or damage the pews, hymnal boxes, drawer in the church's books, etc.

Note that children under the age of reason (7 years old) are not required to attend Mass. While it is *extremely laudable* to bring children of ALL ages to Mass, it is permissible for children under the age of 7 not to attend Mass.

Please do not chew gum or bring food or drinks into the church—it breaks your fast and it's distracting. While it is understandable at times that some parents bring light snacks (e.g., cereal, etc) for their child to consume and occupy them during the Mass, please remember to pick-up after them (e.g., spilt cereal, used tissues, torn papers, etc), so we can leave the condition of the church and pew, as we found it. Since the hymn books are communal property and are reused by the parish

throughout the year, please do not permit the children to bend, tear or write on the pages or plastic covers.

When we receive communion, we make a reverential bow to show respect for Jesus present in the Eucharistic species before receiving His Body and Blood. When receiving the Consecrated Host, please do not grab it from the minister. Receive it in your clean, outstretched, open and crossed palms (held chest-high) or on your tongue. We “receive” Jesus, we don't “take” Jesus. To do so is irreverent and is more akin to grabbing a potato chip, NOT the Body of Christ. Also, as a reminder, in this diocese intinction (dipping the Consecrated Host into the Sacred Blood) is not permitted.

When the minister says, “*Body of Christ*” or “*Blood of Christ*”, our response in faith is a clear “*Amen*” (which means “I believe” or “So be it”). Consume the host immediately before leaving that communion station please.

Non-Catholic Guests: If you bring a non-Catholic guest to Mass, please explain to them the meaning of the Mass, its parts, what to expect, and the strict requirements for receiving Holy Communion in the Church beforehand.

Movement during the Mass: Unless there is a dire medical emergency, unruly/crying child, or physical ailment, necessity, or condition, unnecessary movement in the worship area is to be limited, especially:

- When the proclaimer is reading the First and Second readings;
- When the priest or deacon is proclaiming the Gospel,
- During the homily, or
- During the consecration.

The “*cry room*” is designed for parents whose children are, for some reason or another, disruptive or otherwise unruly or for parents who are more relaxed about their children's behavior during the Mass.

If you arrive and find the Mass has already begun, please enter the worship area quietly and be seated as soon as practical. The Mass is not over until after the final blessing and dismissal. Please wait for the Presider to leave before exiting the church.

Please also remember to practice parking lot etiquette by examples of Christian patience with one another.

