

Who says Catholics don't hear the Bible at Mass?

Mark Haas | Aug 12, 2017

In fact, Scripture is cited more than 100 times.

Perhaps you have heard the common criticisms that “Catholics never read Scripture ... Why don't Catholics have the Bible with them at Mass? ... The Bible is the Word of God, and Catholics don't hear it regularly.”

Well, I would propose that **Christians hear more Scripture at Catholic Mass than in any other form of worship.**

The natural “go-to” response from Catholics to the above criticism is a reference to the Liturgy of the Word. This portion of the Mass typically includes a reading from the Old Testament, followed by a (sung) reading from the Book of Psalms, followed by a reading from the New Testament (the Epistles), and completed with a reading from the Gospels. So far, we count **four Scripture readings total.**

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Almost everything the priest, deacon, or member of the assembly says within the liturgy is based in Scripture.

Here are more than 40 instances in which Catholics recite or reference Scripture (by order of appearance) within the context of the Mass:

Introductory Rites

1. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).
2. Amen (1 Chr 16:36).
3. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor 13:13).
4. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:2).
5. The Lord be with you (Ruth 2:4; 2 Tim 4:22). And with your spirit.

Penitential Act

1. I confess to almighty God (Jas 5:16), and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned (1 Chr 21:8), in my thoughts and in my words (Psalm 19:15), in what I have done and in what I have failed to do (Jas 3:5; Jas 4:17), through my own fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault (Jas 5:16); therefore I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God (1 Thess 5:25).
2. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life (1 Jn 1:9). Amen.
3. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy (Tob 8:4; 1 Tim 1:2).

Gloria

1. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will (Lk 2:14). We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you (Rev 7:12), we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father (Rev 19:6). Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father (2 Jn 3), you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us (Jn 1:29); you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father (Rom 8:34), have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One (Lk 4:34), you alone are the Lord (Ps 83: 19; Rev 15:4), you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ (Lk 1:32) with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen (Jn 14:26).

Profession of Faith

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth (Gen 14:19), of all things visible and invisible (Col 1:16). I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God (Jn 1:18), born of the Father before all ages (Lk 1:35), God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made (Jn 1:1-4). For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and became man (Jn 3:13), and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man (Mt 1:18). For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate (Jn. 19:16); he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). He ascended into heaven (Lk 24:51) and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Col 3:1). He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim. 4:1), and his kingdom will have no end (Lk 1:33). I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26) and the Son, who with the Father and the Son he adored and glorified (Jn 14:16), who spoken through the Prophets (1 Pet 1:10-11). I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church (Mt 16:18). I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Eph 4:4-6), and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come (Rom 6:5). Amen.

Preparation of the Altar

1. Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation (1 Chr 29:10; Ps 89:53; Rom 9:5) for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth (Jas 5:7) and work of human hands, (Qo 3:13), it will become for us the bread of life (Jn 6:35). Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink (Lk 22:17-18).
2. Blessed be God forever (Ps 68:36).
3. *Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father (Heb 12:28).*
4. May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church (Ps 50:23).
5. The Lord be with you; And with your spirit; Lift up your hearts; We lift them up to the Lord (Lam 3:41).
6. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God (Col 3:17).
7. It is right and just (Col 1:3).
8. It is truly right and just, our duty and salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father most holy, through your beloved Son (Col 1:13), Jesus Christ, your Word through whom you made all things (Jn 1:3), whom you sent as our Savior and Redeemer, incarnate by the Holy Spirit and

born of the Virgin (Gal 4:4; Mt 1:18; Lk 1:26-35). Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people (1 Peter 2:9), he stretched out his hands (Is 65:2; Rom 10:21) as he endures his Passion, so as to break the bonds of death (2 Tim 1:10) and manifest the resurrection. And so, with the Angels and all the Saints we declare your glory, as with one voice we acclaim ...

Sanctus & Eucharistic Prayer

1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God hosts (Is 6:3; Rev 4:8). Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9-10). Hosanna in the highest (Is 6:3).
2. To you, therefore, most merciful Father, we make humble prayer and petition through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord (Eph 5:20): that you accept and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices (2 Macc 1:26), which we offer you firstly for your holy catholic Church. Be pleased to grant her peace, to guard, unite and govern her throughout the whole world, together with your servant Francis our Pope, and N. our Bishop, and all those who, holding to the truth, hand on the catholic and apostolic faith (Jn 17:21; Acts 2:42).
3. Remember, Lord, your servants N. and N. and all gathered here, whose faith and devotion are known to you. For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise or they offer to for themselves and all who are dear to them: for the redemption of their souls, in hope of health and well-being, and paying their homage to you, the eternal God, living and true (Ps 106:4-5; Heb 13:15).
4. In communion with those whose memory we venerate, especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ, and blessed Joseph, her spouse, your blessed apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, and all your saints; we ask that through their merits and prayers (1 Tim 2:1), in all things we may be defended by your protecting help. (Mt 1:2-16; Lk 16:9; 1 Cor 12:12, 20f; Rev 5:8).
5. Therefore, Lord, we pray: graciously accept this oblation of our service, that of your whole family; order our days in your peace, and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation and counted among the flock of those you have chosen (Acts 20:28).
6. Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect (Gen 4:4); make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. On the day before he was to suffer, he took bread in his holy and venerable hands, and with eyes raised to heaven to you, O God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples says: Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you (Mt 26:26-28).
8. In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took this precious chalice in his holy and venerable hands, and once more giving thanks, he said the blessing and gave the chalice to his disciples saying: Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me (Mt 26:26-28).
9. The mystery of faith (1 Tim 3:16).
10. Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the resurrection from the dead, and the glorious ascension into heaven of Christ, your son, our Lord, we, your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this holy victim, this spotless victim (1 Pet 1:18-21), the holy Bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting salvation (Jn 6:54).

11. Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel (Gen 4:4) the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith (Gen 22:12), and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim (1 Pet 1: 19).
12. In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty (Rev 8:3-4), so that all of us, who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son, may be filled with grace and heavenly blessing (Eph 1:3).
13. Though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness (Ps 25:7).
14. Through him you give us all these gifts. You fill them with life and goodness, you bless them and make them holy (Ps 104:27-28).

The Our Father & Doxology

1. *The Our Father prayer is recited.* (Mt 6:9-13).
2. Deliver us, Lord, from every evil and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy, keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. (Jn 17:15).
3. Through him, and with him, and in him (Rom 11:36), O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3), all glory and honor is yours (Eph 3:20-21; Rev 4:11), for ever and ever. Amen.

Agnus Dei & Sign of Peace

1. Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live forever and ever (Jn 14:27). The peace of the Lord be with you always (Jn 20:19). Let us offer each other the sign of peace (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thes 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).
2. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace (Jn 1:29).

The Eucharist

1. May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it (Jn 6:54).
2. Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).
3. Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed (Mt 8:8; Lk 7:6-7).

Blessing & Dismissal

1. The Lord be with you; And with your spirit (Ruth 2:4).
2. May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:51).
3. Go in the peace of Christ (Lk 7:50). Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord (Mk 16:15). Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pet 4:11).
4. Thanks be to God (2 Cor. 9:15).

As you can see from the previous 125 biblical references (which do not include those used in alternate forms of the Mass), the Scriptures are uniquely presented to each congregant. (Special thank you to these fantastic sources: *Pope John Paul II Society*; *Companions of the Cross*; *Catholic Bible 101*.)

While it is true, **most Catholics do not participate in the liturgy with a Bible in hand, there is actually a very specific reason for this.**

Hearing the Scriptures within the liturgy, and reading the Scriptures in a weekly Bible study group are quite different. The Scriptures are not simply read, but *proclaimed* within the liturgy.

During the Mass, the Holy Spirit is constantly kindling the hearts of the faithful as they listen to the Word of God (the Church actually encourages the faithful to review readings prior to attending the Mass.)

Therefore, the Church recognizes Holy Scripture as a tool intended to cooperate with the reception of Jesus – body, blood, soul and divinity – in the Eucharist.

Jesus himself is quite clear about how to pass on the faith. Upon founding his Church (Mt. 16:18), Jesus did not actually leave this visible society with a book. What he did leave is a clear set of instructions to “go and make disciples of all nations, **teaching them** everything that I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19).” These instructions are passed on through oral tradition, and through the liturgy (the Mass).

Of course, “**The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord** (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 141).”

While the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC, no. 1324), the Scriptures are abundant within the very Mass that was instituted by Christ himself (Mt. 26:26-28).

