THE DAILY BREAD

The Fiat of the Beloved



The Breaking of Bread

The Mass

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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What Is Really Happening at Mass

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INTRODUCTION

From Attending to Participating

For many Catholic women, the Mass is the most familiar thing in their faith, and therefore, quietly, the most taken for granted. They have attended it countless times, know its rhythms by heart, could follow it half asleep, and precisely because it is so familiar, it can become a thing they attend rather than a thing they enter, a weekly obligation fulfilled rather than the astonishing reality it actually is. And so a woman can spend a lifetime of Sundays present at Mass without ever quite grasping what is happening before her, without the knowledge that would change her from a spectator who attends into a worshipper who participates.

This book is an invitation to cross that line, from attending to participating, by coming to understand what is actually happening at Mass. For the Mass is not a mere ceremony or a weekly obligation but heaven on earth, the re-presentation of Christ's own sacrifice, the fulfillment of thousands of years of God's preparation, the worship of heaven joined to earth, and Christ Himself given as food. When a woman grasps what is really happening at Mass, she cannot show up the same way, for the knowledge changes everything, turning a familiar routine into the most astonishing event she attends all week, and drawing her from the back of her own attention into real participation.

He was known to them in the breaking of the bread. — Luke 24:35

The disciples at Emmaus came to know the risen Lord in the breaking of the bread, and it is in the breaking of the bread, the Mass, that a woman too meets Him most fully. This book will show her what is happening there: the difference between attending and participating; the Jewish roots that the Mass fulfills; the sacrifice of Christ made present; the worship of heaven joined to earth; a walk through the Mass itself, part by part; and how to move from passive attendance into full, conscious, active participation, modeled on the women of the Gospel who were most attentively present to Christ. A woman has been attending the Mass, perhaps for a lifetime. This book invites her, now, to begin to participate.

CHAPTER ONE

Attending Is Not Enough

The Difference Knowledge Makes

There is a profound difference between attending the Mass and participating in it, between being present as a spectator and entering as a worshipper, and the key that unlocks the difference is understanding what is actually happening, for knowledge changes how a woman shows up. A woman may attend the Mass faithfully for years and still only attend it, present in body but not truly participating, and the reason is often simply that she does not grasp what is happening, so that recovering the knowledge of what the Mass is opens the door from attendance to participation.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. — John 4:24

Present but Not Participating

It is possible to be present at Mass without truly participating in it, to attend in body while remaining a spectator, going through the familiar motions without entering the reality, so that a woman can be at Mass without really being in it. The familiarity of the Mass makes it easy to attend without participating, to stand and sit and kneel and recite on cue while the mind wanders and the heart remains outside, present physically but absent interiorly, a spectator watching a ceremony rather than a worshipper entering an event. This is the condition of many faithful women, present at Mass week after week yet not truly participating, attending a familiar routine rather than entering the astonishing reality, so that their Mass attendance, however faithful, remains attendance rather than participation. The woman who recognizes that she can be present but not participating sees the gap between attending and truly entering the Mass, and can begin to close it. Present but not participating describes the woman who attends Mass in body while remaining a spectator, going through the motions without entering the reality, so that she can be at Mass faithfully and yet not truly be in it.

Knowledge Changes How You Show Up

What most often moves a woman from attending to participating is knowledge, understanding what is actually happening at Mass, for the knowledge of the reality before her cannot leave her a spectator but draws her into participation. When a woman truly grasps what the Mass is, that it is the sacrifice of Christ made present, heaven joined to earth, Christ Himself given to her, she cannot show up the same way, for such knowledge changes everything, turning a familiar routine into an astonishing reality she must enter rather than observe. This is why knowledge changes how a woman shows up, for the one who understands what is happening cannot remain a passive spectator before it but is drawn into attentive, active participation, her whole disposition changed by knowing the reality she is part of. The woman who gains the knowledge of what the Mass is finds it

changes how she shows up, drawing her from spectating into participation by the sheer reality of what she now understands. Knowledge changes how you show up, for understanding what is actually happening at Mass cannot leave a woman a spectator but draws her into participation, turning a familiar routine into an astonishing reality she must enter rather than merely observe.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

True participation in the Mass is worship in spirit and truth, a worship that engages a woman's whole self, mind and heart and soul, in the reality of what is happening, rather than a merely external performance of the rituals. Jesus taught that true worshippers worship in spirit and truth, with the whole self engaged in genuine worship rather than mere outward observance, and this is what participation in the Mass means, a worship that engages a woman interiorly, her mind understanding, her heart adoring, her soul entering the reality, not merely her body performing the external actions. This means participating in the Mass is worshipping in spirit and truth, bringing her whole self into the worship, engaging interiorly with what is happening rather than performing the rituals externally while her spirit stays outside, so that her participation is real worship and not empty form. The woman who worships in spirit and truth participates fully in the Mass, engaging her whole self in the reality rather than performing the rituals from outside. Worship in spirit and truth is what true participation in the Mass means, a worship that engages a woman's whole self, mind, heart, and soul, in the reality of what is happening, rather than a merely external performance of the rituals from outside.

CHAPTER TWO

Rooted in the Old

The Jewish Roots of the Mass

The Mass did not appear from nowhere but is the fulfillment of thousands of years of God's preparation, rooted in the worship of ancient Israel, so that understanding its Jewish roots reveals the Mass as the culmination of a long story God had been telling all along. The Passover, the Temple sacrifice, the Sabbath, these great realities of the Old Covenant find their fulfillment in the Mass, so that seeing how the Mass fulfills them deepens a woman's understanding of what she takes part in and reveals its astonishing depth.

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. — 1 Corinthians 5:7

The Passover Fulfilled

The Passover, in which Israel was delivered from slavery through the blood of a lamb and a sacred meal, finds its fulfillment in Christ, the true Passover Lamb, whose sacrifice delivers from sin and whose Body and Blood are the sacred meal of the new covenant, represented in the Mass. At the first Passover, Israel was saved from death by the blood of a lamb and ate the lamb in a sacred meal, and this Passover pointed forward to Christ, the true Lamb of God, whose blood delivers from the slavery of sin and death, and who at the Last Supper, itself a Passover meal, gave His Body and Blood as the new sacred meal, so that the Mass is the fulfillment of the Passover, Christ our Passover Lamb sacrificed and given as food. This means the Mass is the Christian Passover, the deliverance won by the true Lamb made present and His saving flesh given as the sacred meal, so that a woman at Mass takes part in the fulfillment of the Passover, the ancient feast now completed in Christ. The woman who sees the Passover fulfilled understands the Mass as the true Passover, Christ the Lamb sacrificed and given, the ancient feast completed in Him. The Passover fulfilled is one root of the Mass, for Christ is the true Passover Lamb whose sacrifice delivers from sin and whose Body and Blood are the sacred meal of the new covenant, so that the Mass is the Christian Passover, the ancient feast completed in Him.

The Sacrifice Fulfilled

The sacrifices of the Temple, in which offerings were made to God for sin and worship, find their fulfillment in the one perfect sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which the Mass makes present, so that the Mass is the fulfillment of all the Temple sacrifices in the single sacrifice of the Lamb. The worship of ancient Israel centered on sacrifice, the offering of victims to God in the Temple for atonement and worship, and these many sacrifices pointed forward to the one perfect sacrifice they could not themselves accomplish, the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which alone truly takes away sin, so that the Temple sacrifices find their fulfillment in Calvary, and the Mass, which makes Calvary present, is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices of old. This means the Mass is the one true sacrifice toward which all the Temple offerings pointed, Christ's perfect sacrifice made present, so that a woman at Mass is present at the fulfillment of all the ancient sacrifices in the single offering of Christ. The woman who sees the sacrifice fulfilled understands the Mass as the one true sacrifice that completes all the Temple offerings, Calvary made present. The sacrifice fulfilled is another root of the Mass, for the Temple sacrifices pointed to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which the Mass makes present, so that the Mass fulfills all the ancient sacrifices in the single offering of the Lamb.

The Sabbath Fulfilled

The Sabbath, the holy day of rest and worship given to Israel, finds its fulfillment in the Lord's Day, Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection, on which Christians gather for the Mass, so that the weekly keeping of Sunday fulfills the Sabbath in the new covenant. God gave Israel the Sabbath as a holy day set apart for rest and worship, and this Sabbath finds its fulfillment in the Lord's Day, the first day of the week on which Christ rose, which the Church keeps as her holy day, gathering for the Mass to worship and to enter the rest Christ won, so that Sunday is the Christian fulfillment of the Sabbath. This means the woman who gathers for Mass on Sunday keeps the fulfilled Sabbath, the holy day now centered on the resurrection and the Eucharist, so that her Sunday worship stands in the long tradition of God's holy day, now completed in the Lord's Day. The woman who sees the Sabbath fulfilled understands her Sunday Mass as the keeping of the fulfilled Sabbath, the holy day completed in the day of resurrection. The Sabbath fulfilled is a third root of the Mass, for the holy day of rest and worship given to Israel finds its fulfillment in the Lord's Day, Sunday, on which Christians gather for the Mass, so that the weekly keeping of Sunday completes the Sabbath in the new covenant.

CHAPTER THREE

The Sacrifice Made Present

Not a Symbol but a Making-Present

At the heart of what the Mass is lies a truth that many Catholics have never fully grasped, that the Mass is not merely a symbol or a memory of Christ's sacrifice but the re-presentation of that one sacrifice, the making-present of Calvary itself, so that the Mass does not merely recall the sacrifice of Christ but makes it present. Understanding the Mass as the making-present of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, rather than a symbolic reminder of a past event, reveals the astonishing reality a woman takes part in each time she is at Mass.

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. — 1 Corinthians 11:26

One Sacrifice, Made Present

The Mass does not repeat Christ's sacrifice, which was offered once for all, nor is it a mere symbol of it, but makes that one sacrifice present, so that the same offering of Calvary is truly present on the altar, not repeated and not merely remembered but re-presented. Christ died once for all, offering the one perfect sacrifice that need never be repeated, and the Mass does not repeat it but makes it present, re-presenting the single sacrifice of

Calvary so that it is truly present on the altar, the same offering of the same Christ, not a new sacrifice and not a mere symbol of the old, but the one sacrifice made present across time. This means that at Mass a woman is not merely remembering a past event or watching a symbolic reenactment but is present at the one sacrifice of Christ made present, Calvary itself brought into her own time and place, the same saving offering made present on the altar before her. The woman who understands one sacrifice made present knows that at Mass she stands before the very sacrifice of Christ, re-presented and not merely recalled. One sacrifice, made present, is the heart of the Mass, which does not repeat Christ's once-for-all sacrifice nor merely symbolize it but makes it present, so that the same offering of Calvary is truly present on the altar, re-presented and not merely remembered.

Not a Symbol but a Reality

The Mass is not a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, a mere sign pointing to a past event, but the reality itself made present, so that a woman at Mass is not looking at a representation of Calvary but is present at Calvary made real on the altar. There is a world of difference between a symbol, which points to something absent, and a making-present, which brings the reality itself, and the Mass is the latter, not a symbol of an absent sacrifice but the real sacrifice made present, so that Calvary is not merely signified at Mass but made genuinely present, the one offering of Christ truly there on the altar. This means the Mass is a reality and not a symbol, the actual sacrifice of Christ made present rather than a sign pointing to it, so that a woman at Mass participates in the real offering of Christ, present at the reality itself and not merely at a symbol of it. The woman who understands the Mass as reality and not symbol knows she is present at the actual sacrifice of Christ made present, not at a sign of an absent event. Not a symbol but a reality is what the Mass is, the actual sacrifice of Christ made present rather than a sign pointing to a past event, so that a woman at Mass is present at Calvary made real on the altar and not merely at a representation of it.

Entering the Offering

Because the Mass makes Christ's sacrifice present, a woman at Mass can enter into that offering, uniting herself and her life to Christ's sacrifice, offering herself with Him to the Father, so that she participates in the sacrifice rather than merely witnessing it. The Mass is not only Christ's offering made present but an offering a woman can enter, joining herself to Christ's sacrifice, placing her own life, her joys and sufferings and self, upon the altar with Him, offering herself to the Father in union with Christ's offering, so that she participates in the sacrifice rather than merely watching it. This entering into the offering is the deepest participation in the Mass, for a woman does not merely observe Christ's

sacrifice made present but joins it, uniting herself to Christ in His offering to the Father, making her own life part of the sacrifice, so that the Mass becomes her offering too, joined to His. The woman who enters the offering unites herself to Christ's sacrifice, offering herself with Him and participating in the sacrifice rather than merely witnessing it. Entering the offering is the deepest participation in the Mass, a woman joining herself to Christ's sacrifice made present, offering her own life with Him to the Father, so that she participates in the sacrifice rather than merely witnessing it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Heaven on Earth

The Worship of Heaven Joined to Earth

The Mass is not only the sacrifice of Christ made present but heaven on earth, the worship of heaven joined to the worship of earth, so that at Mass a woman is caught up into the eternal liturgy that the Book of Revelation describes, the worship around the throne of God. Understanding the Mass as heaven on earth, the earthly liturgy joined to the heavenly worship of the angels and saints, reveals yet another dimension of the astonishing reality a woman enters each time she is at Mass.

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. — Revelation 4:8

The Worship of Heaven

The Book of Revelation shows a vision of the worship of heaven, the angels and saints gathered around the throne of God, offering unceasing worship to the Lamb, and this heavenly worship is the reality into which the Mass joins a woman. In Revelation, the Apostle John is shown the worship of heaven, the throne of God surrounded by angels and saints, the Lamb at the center, the ceaseless song of holy, holy, holy, the eternal liturgy of heaven offered to God, and this heavenly worship is not separate from the Mass but is the very reality the Mass joins, for the earthly liturgy is caught up into the heavenly one. This means that at Mass a woman is not engaged in a merely earthly ceremony but is joined to the worship of heaven, the same adoration offered by the angels and saints around the throne, so that the Mass is heaven on earth, the earthly and heavenly liturgies made one. The woman who understands the worship of heaven sees her Mass as joined to the eternal liturgy of heaven, the same worship offered around the throne of God. The worship of heaven, shown in Revelation as the angels and saints adoring the Lamb

around the throne, is the reality the Mass joins, so that at Mass a woman is caught up into the eternal liturgy of heaven rather than a merely earthly ceremony.

Earth Joined to Heaven

At the Mass, the worship of earth is joined to the worship of heaven, so that the congregation on earth and the angels and saints in glory worship together as one, the earthly liturgy caught up into the heavenly one. The Mass is the point where heaven and earth meet, where the worship of the congregation gathered in a particular church is joined to the eternal worship of heaven, so that a woman at Mass worships not alone or merely with those around her but together with all the angels and saints, the whole company of heaven, earth and heaven united in one act of worship. This is why the Mass includes the song of the angels, the holy, holy, holy that Revelation shows heaven singing, for at that moment the earthly congregation joins its voice to the heavenly liturgy, earth united to heaven in the worship of God. The woman who understands earth joined to heaven knows that at Mass she worships with the whole company of heaven, her earthly worship caught up into the eternal liturgy. Earth joined to heaven is the reality of the Mass, where the worship of the congregation is united to the eternal worship of the angels and saints, so that a woman worships together with the whole company of heaven, earth and heaven made one in the worship of God.

Worshipping With the Whole Company

Knowing that the Mass joins earth to heaven changes how a woman worships, for she sees that she is never worshipping alone but always with the whole company of heaven, the angels and saints joining their worship to hers around the one throne. The woman who grasps that the Mass is heaven on earth no longer experiences it as a small gathering in an ordinary church but as her joining the vast and eternal worship of heaven, surrounded by angels and saints, united with the whole company of the blessed in adoring the Lamb, so that her worship is lifted into something far greater than the visible congregation. This changes how she worships, for she knows her praise joins the praise of heaven, her adoration unites with the adoration of the angels and saints, so that even the humblest Mass is heaven on earth, the woman caught up with the whole company of heaven into the worship of God. The woman who worships with the whole company knows she is never alone at Mass but joined to the angels and saints in the eternal worship of heaven. Worshipping with the whole company is what the woman who understands the Mass as heaven on earth comes to know, that she never worships alone but always with the angels and saints, her worship joined to the eternal liturgy around the one throne.

CHAPTER FIVE

Walking Through the Mass, I

Gathering and the Word

To participate in the Mass, a woman is helped by understanding its parts, what each moment is and means, and the Mass unfolds in a clear and purposeful order, beginning with the Introductory Rites that gather the congregation and the Liturgy of the Word that proclaims God's word. Walking through the first half of the Mass, the gathering and the Word, reveals the meaning of each part and helps a woman participate consciously rather than merely following along, understanding what is happening as it unfolds.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. — Romans 10:17

The Introductory Rites

The Mass begins with the Introductory Rites, which gather the congregation into one, prepare them to worship, and dispose them to receive, through the entrance, the sign of the cross, the greeting, the penitential act, and the opening prayer. The opening of the Mass is not mere preamble but a purposeful gathering and preparation, as the congregation assembles and becomes one body, signs itself with the cross, is greeted in the Lord, acknowledges its sins in the penitential act to be cleansed and made ready, sings God's praise, and is drawn together in the opening prayer, so that the people are gathered, purified, and prepared to enter the sacred mysteries. This means the Introductory Rites are a woman's preparation to worship, gathering her into the congregation, disposing her heart, cleansing her through the penitential act, so that she enters the Mass ready to receive, and she can participate in them consciously as the preparation they are rather than treating them as a throat-clearing before the real thing. The woman who understands the Introductory Rites participates in them as her gathering and preparation, entering the Mass disposed to worship. The Introductory Rites gather the congregation into one, prepare them to worship, and dispose them to receive, through the entrance, the sign of the cross, the greeting, the penitential act, and the opening prayer, so that a woman is gathered, purified, and made ready to enter the sacred mysteries.

The Liturgy of the Word

The first main part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Word, in which God speaks to His people through the Scriptures proclaimed, the readings from the Old Testament, the psalm, the New Testament, and the Gospel, followed by the homily that breaks open the

word. In the Liturgy of the Word, God Himself addresses His people, speaking through the inspired Scriptures proclaimed aloud, the first reading usually from the Old Testament, the responsorial psalm sung in response, the second reading from the New Testament letters, and the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, the very words and deeds of Christ, after which the homily opens the word and applies it to the hearers. This means the Liturgy of the Word is a real encounter with God speaking, not a mere preliminary to the Eucharist but God addressing His people through the proclaimed word, so that a woman participates by listening, truly hearing, receiving the word God speaks to her, for faith comes from hearing the word of Christ. The woman who understands the Liturgy of the Word participates by truly listening, receiving the word God speaks to His people through the Scriptures. The Liturgy of the Word is God speaking to His people through the Scriptures proclaimed, the readings, the psalm, and the Gospel, followed by the homily that breaks open the word, so that a woman participates by truly listening and receiving the word God addresses to her.

Responding in Faith

After hearing God's word, the congregation responds in faith, professing the Creed and offering the Prayer of the Faithful, so that the Liturgy of the Word moves from God's speaking to the people's response of faith and intercession. Having heard God speak in the Scriptures and the homily, the people respond, first by professing their faith together in the Creed, affirming the truths God has revealed, and then by offering the Prayer of the Faithful, interceding for the Church and the world, so that the Liturgy of the Word concludes with the congregation's response of faith and prayer to the God who has spoken. This means a woman participates in the Liturgy of the Word not only by listening but by responding, professing the faith she has received and joining in the prayers of intercession, so that she enters the dialogue of the liturgy, God speaking and the people responding in faith and prayer. The woman who responds in faith participates fully in the Liturgy of the Word, professing the Creed and joining the intercessions as her response to the God who has spoken. Responding in faith completes the Liturgy of the Word, the congregation professing the Creed and offering the Prayer of the Faithful, so that a woman participates not only by listening but by responding to the God who has spoken, entering the dialogue of word and response.

CHAPTER SIX

Walking Through the Mass, II

The Eucharist and the Sending

The second main part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the heart of the whole celebration, in which the bread and wine are offered, consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ, and received in Communion, followed by the Concluding Rites that send the people out on mission. Walking through this second half of the Mass, from the offering through the consecration and Communion to the dismissal, reveals the summit of the Mass and the sending that flows from it, helping a woman participate in its holiest moments.

This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. — Luke 22:19

The Offering and Consecration

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the offering of bread and wine and the gifts of the people, which are then, through the great Eucharistic Prayer, consecrated by the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Christ into His very Body and Blood. In the preparation of the gifts, the bread and wine are brought forward and offered, along with the offerings of the people, and then in the Eucharistic Prayer, the great prayer of thanksgiving and consecration, the priest, speaking in the person of Christ, repeats the words of the Last Supper, this is my body, this is my blood, and by the power of the Holy Spirit the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, the sacrifice of Calvary made present on the altar. This means the offering and consecration are the holiest moment of the Mass, when Christ becomes truly present and His sacrifice is re-presented, so that a woman participates by offering herself with the gifts and adoring Christ made present, entering the great action with reverence and faith. The woman who understands the offering and consecration participates by offering herself with the gifts and adoring Christ made present in the Eucharistic Prayer. The offering and consecration are the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the bread and wine offered and then consecrated into Christ's Body and Blood through the Eucharistic Prayer, so that a woman participates by offering herself with the gifts and adoring Christ made present.

Communion

After the consecration and the Lord's Prayer, the congregation receives Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, the most intimate union with the Lord, so that the sacrifice offered becomes the food received, Christ given to each one who comes. Following the Eucharistic Prayer, the people pray the Lord's Prayer, exchange the sign of peace, and then come forward to receive Holy Communion, the very Body and Blood of Christ, taking the Lord Himself into themselves in the most intimate union possible on earth, so that the sacrifice made present on the altar is now given as food to the faithful, Christ received by each one who comes in faith. This means Communion is the climax of

a woman's participation, the receiving of Christ Himself, so that she participates by coming to receive the Lord worthily and with faith, uniting herself to Him in Communion, and then by spending the precious moments after Communion in adoration and thanksgiving, Christ dwelling within her. The woman who understands Communion participates by receiving Christ with faith and reverence and dwelling with Him in thanksgiving, united to the Lord she has received. Communion is the climax of the Mass, the receiving of Christ's Body and Blood in the most intimate union with the Lord, so that a woman participates by coming to receive Him worthily and with faith and then dwelling with Him in thanksgiving.

Sent on Mission

The Mass concludes with the Concluding Rites, the blessing and the dismissal, which send the people out, strengthened by what they have received, to live and share the faith in the world, so that the Mass does not end but overflows into mission. After Communion and a closing prayer, the Mass concludes with a blessing and the dismissal, the sending forth, for the very word Mass comes from the sending, and the congregation is sent out, nourished by the word and the Eucharist, to carry Christ into the world, to live the faith, to love and serve and witness, so that the Mass flows out into the whole of life. This means the dismissal is not a mere ending but a commissioning, a sending of a woman out to live what she has received and to be Christ's presence in the world, so that she participates by receiving the sending as a mission, carrying the grace of the Mass into her week. The woman who understands that she is sent on mission receives the dismissal as a commissioning, going out to live and share the faith strengthened by the Mass. Sent on mission is how the Mass concludes, the blessing and dismissal sending the people out to live and share the faith in the world, so that the Mass overflows into mission and a woman carries its grace into the whole of her life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Learning to Participate

The Attentive Presence of the Women

Understanding what the Mass is leads at last to the goal of this whole book, learning to participate in it fully, consciously, and actively, bringing the knowledge of what is happening into a real and attentive presence, modeled on the women of the Gospel who were most attentively present to Christ. The women who stood at the Cross, who came first to the tomb, who were present at Pentecost, model the attentive, faithful presence

that the Mass asks of every woman, so that learning to participate means learning their kind of presence before the Lord.

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, and Mary Magdalene. — John 19:25

Full, Conscious, and Active

The participation the Mass asks for is full, conscious, and active, a participation that engages a woman's whole self, understands what is happening, and actively enters it, rather than a passive, distracted, or merely external presence. The Church calls the faithful to full, conscious, and active participation in the Mass, which does not mean constant busyness but a participation that is full, engaging the whole person, conscious, understanding what is happening, and active, really entering into the worship with mind and heart and soul, so that a woman participates with her whole self rather than attending passively or externally. This means learning to participate is learning this full, conscious, active engagement, bringing understanding and attention and the whole heart into the Mass, entering its reality rather than observing it, so that a woman's participation is the real and whole engagement the Mass asks of her. The woman who learns full, conscious, and active participation engages her whole self in the Mass, understanding and entering its reality rather than attending passively. Full, conscious, and active participation is what the Mass asks, engaging a woman's whole self, understanding what is happening, and really entering the worship, rather than a passive, distracted, or external presence.

The Women Who Were Present

The women of the Gospel model the attentive, faithful presence the Mass asks, for they stood by the Cross when others fled, came first to the tomb, and were present at Pentecost, giving a woman today the pattern of a faithful presence before the Lord. When the Gospel is read, the women stand out for their faithful presence, standing by the Cross of Jesus in His suffering when most of the disciples had fled, coming first to the tomb in the darkness of grief, gathered with the Church at Pentecost, present and attentive to Christ through His passion, death, and the birth of the Church, so that they model a faithful, attentive presence before the Lord. This means a woman today has, in these women of the Gospel, a model for her presence at Mass, a faithful attentiveness that stays present to Christ, that does not flee or grow distracted but remains attentively with Him, so that she can learn from them the kind of presence the Mass asks. The woman who looks to the women who were present learns from them a faithful, attentive presence before the Lord, the pattern for her own presence at Mass. The women who were present,

standing by the Cross, coming first to the tomb, gathered at Pentecost, model the attentive, faithful presence the Mass asks, giving a woman today the pattern of a faithful attentiveness before the Lord.

Bringing Your Whole Self

Learning to participate finally means bringing a woman's whole self to the Mass, her attention, her heart, her life, offering all of it in the worship and entering fully the reality of what is happening, so that she is wholly present to the Lord who is wholly present to her. The deepest participation is the giving of the whole self, a woman bringing to the Mass not only her body but her full attention, her engaged heart, her very life to be offered with Christ, entering wholly into the worship and the sacrifice and the Communion, so that she is fully present to the Lord. This means learning to participate is learning to bring her whole self, to be wholly present, attentive and engaged and self-offering, like the women who were wholly present to Christ, so that her Mass becomes a full giving of herself in worship rather than a partial and distracted attendance. The woman who brings her whole self to the Mass participates most fully, wholly present to the Lord who is wholly present to her, offering all she is in the worship. Bringing your whole self is the deepest participation in the Mass, a woman giving her attention, her heart, and her life in the worship and entering fully the reality of what is happening, so that she is wholly present to the Lord who is wholly present to her.

CONCLUSION

Begin to Participate

The woman who has attended the Mass, perhaps for a lifetime, now knows what is actually happening there, and the knowledge changes everything. We have seen that attending is not enough, that knowledge moves a woman to participation; that the Mass is rooted in and fulfills the Passover, the Temple sacrifice, and the Sabbath; that it makes present Christ's one sacrifice, not a symbol but a reality; that it is heaven on earth, the worship of heaven joined to earth; and we have walked through the Mass from the gathering through the Word, the Eucharist, and the sending, learning to participate fully, consciously, and actively, after the model of the women who were most attentively present to Christ.

Through all of it runs a single invitation: begin to participate. Do not merely attend the Mass as a familiar routine, present in body but absent in spirit, but enter it as the astonishing reality it is, the sacrifice of Christ made present, heaven joined to earth, the

Lord Himself given to you. For the woman who knows what is happening at Mass cannot show up the same way, but is drawn from the back of her own attention into full, conscious, active participation in the greatest event of her week.

So begin to participate. Come to the Mass knowing what it is, and let that knowledge change how you show up. Enter the Introductory Rites as your gathering and preparation. Listen to the Liturgy of the Word as God truly speaking to you, and respond in faith. Offer yourself with the gifts, adore Christ made present in the consecration, and receive Him in Communion with faith and reverence. Receive the dismissal as a sending on mission. And through it all, bring your whole self, attentive and engaged, present to the Lord as the women of the Gospel were present to Him, standing by the Cross, first at the tomb, gathered at Pentecost. You have been attending the Mass. Now, knowing what it is, begin to participate, and you will find in the breaking of the bread the Lord Himself, given to you.

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