

THE MASS EXPLAINED TO CHILDREN

An activity book to accompany
'The Mass Explained to Children,' by Maria
Montessori

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CHAPTER 1 THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part 1 The meaning of the Mass; the Mystery

Comprehension

1. When was the First Mass celebrated?
2. Whom does the priest represent?
3. What is the deepest mystery, the greatest wonder of the Mass?
4. Why is a Catholic church a holy place?

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the following words. If you are not sure what they mean, use a dictionary to find out.

remission
devout
commemoration
memorial
fervour
tabernacle

Memorisation/handwriting:

“I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.”

Discussion question

If we truly believe that at Mass Jesus is really and truly present and comes to dwell in our hearts, how should that make us behave during Mass, or whenever we are before the Tabernacle?

Extension question

Which Jewish festival was being celebrated on the night of the Last Supper? From what event is the name of this festival derived? Write what you know about it (you can read this story in Exodus 12:1-29)

CHAPTER 1 THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part 2 The Church; History of the Mass

Comprehension

- 1) What unites Catholics who are living members of the Church?
- 2) What does a person need to put a noble teaching into practice?
- 3) What are the catacombs?
- 4) For the first Christians, how did the Mass become a Last supper too?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words :

stupendous

doctrine

aspire

inspire

rapt

proclaim

Memorisation/ handwriting

“I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

Discussion question

How do you think persecution might have helped the first Christians celebrate Mass with more devotion than we do today?

Extension exercise

Read St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians Chapter 2, verse 21 from which the above quotation is taken. Write in your own words what you think St Paul is saying.

CHAPTER 1 THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part 3 Catechumens and Faithful; the Communion of the Saints

Comprehension

- 1) What are 'catechumens'?
- 2) Name two things that the Faithful used to bring to Mass.
- 3) Which saints especially plead for us at the altar during Mass?
- 4) How can the saints help us?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words:

unleavened
bustle
recollection
merits
invoke
beseech

Memorisation/ handwriting

“I beseech Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints to pray to the Lord our God for me.”

Discussion question

Why were catechumens not allowed to be present at the second part of the Mass? Today, the catechumens are allowed to stay for the whole Mass. Do you think this is better? Why/ why not?

Extension questions

How many times can the 'Confiteor' be said during the Mass, and who says it? Other than at Mass, when might it be used? Try to learn it by heart; if you know it in English, try learning it in Latin.

CHAPTER 1 THE MEANING OF THE MASS

Part 4 Mass bells, spiritual atmosphere and the Call

Comprehension

- 1) What are the Mass bells calling you to receive?
- 2) How is it that morning Mass is being offered ceaselessly throughout the world?
- 3) What did Christ say about children?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

invocation
dawn
atmosphere
immense
meditation
afflicted

Memorisation/ handwriting

“The early hours of the morning are the most beautiful and the holiest hours of the day.”

Discussion question

The rules on fasting before Mass have been changed since this book was written. Now we fast for a much shorter time. Do you think it was better to fast for longer? Why/why not?

Extension question

Read and copy out the beautiful words of Christ recorded in Matthew 11:28-30, on which the meditation at the end of this chapter is partly based.

CHAPTER II WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MASS

Part 1 Preparing the table; altar steps; altar cloths; ornaments

Comprehension

1. What do the five crosses on the altar represent?
2. What does an altar stone contain?
3. What do the three altar steps represent?
4. What three things must be placed on every altar even when it is not in use?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words :

venerable
sentinel
accessories
linen
superfluous
illuminate

Memorisation/handwriting:

“Christ suffered to illuminate mankind with His light of love, pardon and peace.”

Discussion question

If only three things have to be placed on the altar, why do we add so many other things (flowers, lamps, pictures etc.)?

Extension: question

Read the story in the Gospel of Luke 2: 22-40. Who called the baby Jesus 'the light of the world', and what name (derived from these words) is given to the feast day on which we recall this event? Which mystery of the Rosary also recalls the same event? Try to find the Latin name for the well known prayer which is found in this Gospel passage.

CHAPTER II WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MASS

Part 2 Preparing the altar for Mass; the sacred vessels

Comprehension

1. List the other five items which are needed before Mass can begin.
2. Why can the chalice and paten only be touched by the priest?
3. Where, exactly, does the priest place the chalice?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words:

missal
acolyte
officiate
layman
rubrics

Memorisation/handwriting

“No hand that is not consecrated for the priesthood may touch the sacred vessels.”

Discussion questions

In recent times, it is quite common to see lay people handling the sacred vessels, and even the Blessed Sacrament Itself. Do you think this is a good idea? Why/why not?

Extension question

Read the story of Saint Tarcisus. Either write a brief account of his life in your own words, or write a short story of your own, imagining that you are called upon to defend the Blessed Sacrament, perhaps at risk of your own life.

CHAPTER II WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MASS

Part 3 What the priest carries

Comprehension

1. What does the burse contain?
2. What is the corporal? Why is it so special?
3. What is the purificator?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words :

corpus (translate this Latin word)

brocade

linen (what is this made from?)

inferior

ablutions

Memorisation/handwriting:

“Love and devotion lead the faithful to ornament the sacred vessels and to enrich them with precious stones.”

Discussion question

Why must everything which comes into contact with the consecrated bread and wine be of the best materials (linen, silver etc.)?

Extension question

Copy the drawings of the paten and chalice from your book and decorate them with intricate patterns, using silver or gold pens if you can. If possible, try to find some pictures of ancient, ornate Mass vessels to study.

CHAPTER II WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MASS

Part 4 The bread and wine; the priest

Comprehension

1. What is the word we use for what is visibly present on the altar after the consecration?
2. Fill in the gaps: The priest “is the link; the instrument.....”
3. Why must we show reverence to the priest?

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the following words

scrupulous
particle
cultivate
illustrious
distribute
personification
pact

Memorisation/handwriting

“He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him.”

Discussion question

In days gone by, queens, princes and other important personages would prepare the Eucharistic bread with their own hands (often even grinding the wheat themselves). What do you think the common people learned from this?

Extension question

Who were the first priests and on what night did they become priests? What do we call the ceremony in which a man is made a priest, and in which his hands receive a special blessing so that he can touch the Body and Blood of Christ? What special sort of person is needed to perform this ceremony?

CHAPTER II WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MASS

Part 5 The sacred vestments and the liturgical colours

Comprehension

1. In what ways does the priest, when vesting, represent a soldier of Christ?
2. The priest puts on the special vestments over his ordinary clothes: what does this represent?
3. What two special garments would the priest wear at Benediction?

Vocabulary

Explain what each of the following vestments and colours symbolises:

Vestments: amice, alb, girdle, maniple, stole, chasuble

Colours: red, white, violet, black, green

Memorisation/handwriting

“Fabrics of the most extraordinary beauty are worked by loving hands, in the silence of cloisters, to clothe the priest of God.”

Discussion: question

Some people argue that the priest's vestments should be made of cheap material and the money saved be given to the poor. How might you argue against this?

Extension question

On which two days of the year is the priest allowed to wear pink, or 'rose', vestments? What does the rose colour symbolise? Find the Latin names for these days (you can find these in your Missal: they are taken from the first word of the Introit for the Mass of each day). Which seasons of the liturgical year do these two days fall in?

CHAPTER III INTRODUCTION TO THE MASS

Part 1 The Divine theatre; the parts of the Mass; the representative objects

Comprehension

1. Who are the actors in the drama of the Mass?

2. i) The Mass of the Catechumens culminates in what?
ii) The Mass of the Faithful culminates in what?

3. What are the three parts of the Mass of the Faithful?
a) O.... b) C..... c) H..... C.....

4. Which two objects bear witness to the two parts of the Mass?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

commemorating
consecutive
drama
culminates
principal

Discussion question

Which of the two parts of the Mass would you say is more important? Why?

Memorisation/handwriting

“The feelings of love, expectation and gratitude expressed by the priest officiating at the altar are re-echoed in the hearts of the people.”

Extension question

Explain in your own words how the “whole Mass recalls the whole life of Christ” (use this chapter to help you)

CHAPTER IV THE MASS OF THE CATECHUMENS

Part 1 up to 'The Ascent'

Comprehension

1. With what great sign do we begin Holy Mass?
2. From which ancient prayer is the dialogue between priest and server at the foot of the altar taken?
3. What sort of attitude must the priest have before he can go up to the altar?
4. What do the three altar steps represent?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

officiating
dialogue
exterior/interior
disconsolate
invocation
grievous

Discussion:question

Why does the priest say so many prayers before actually ascending to the altar? What virtue is he begging God for (it is the opposite of pride)?

Memorisation/handwriting

“It is no use going up to the altar with an exterior offering, if the heart is not first prepared by an interior offering.”

Extension

When we make the sign of the Cross, we are calling to mind two particular things: can you write down what they are? Where in the Mass do we sign ourselves with three very small crosses?

CHAPTER IV THE MASS OF THE CATECHUMENS

Part 2 from 'The meeting with the saints' onwards

1. When was the Gloria first sung, and by whom?
2. Find in your missal the Latin words for 'The Lord be with you', 'And with thy spirit'.
3. Give three types of writing which may be read out under the title 'Epistle':
4. Why do we sign a little cross on our forehead, lips and breast before the priest reads the Gospel?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

pervade
epistle
Messias/Messiah
Gradual (Latin meaning)
'*munda cor meum*'
incarnate

Discussion question

Why is our posture (sitting, standing, kneeling) different at different times of the Mass? Why, for example, do we sit for the Epistle, but stand for the Gospel?

Memorisation/handwriting

'The repentant man may pass freely'.

Extension: The New Testament consists of four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and twenty-two books known as Epistles, fourteen of which were written by Saint Paul. Can you list the authors of the Gospels, the author of Acts, and the four authors of the remaining eight Epistles which were NOT written by Saint Paul?

CHAPTER V

THE MASS OF THE FAITHFUL

Part 1 The offertory; the centre of the Mass

Comprehension

1. What does the priest put into the empty chalice?
2. Find in your missal the Latin words meaning 'Pray, brethren..' at the Offertory.
3. What should the people do as the priest offers the bread and wine to God?
4. Find in your missal the Latin words for 'Holy, Holy, Holy':

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

initiated
vestige
exalt
supplication
oblation

Discussion question

Can you think of any practical reasons why the practice of the faithful bringing gifts to the altar at the Offertory fell into disuse?

Memorisation/handwriting

“Humbled in mind and contrite of heart, may we find favour with Thee, O Lord.”

Extension: question

Read the Gospel passage Matthew 5:22-24. Write in your own words how this Gospel passage might help you to make your own offering at Mass more pleasing to God.

CHAPTER V

THE MASS OF THE FAITHFUL

Part 2 The Sacrifice (up to 'The Consecration')

Comprehension

1. In the New Rite taught to us by Jesus himself, only one sacrifice – the Son of Man – is offered. Copy and complete this sentence: “Our sacrifice is to.....”
2. Give four reasons why the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God, who has cause to be angered by the sins of men:
3. What do the elevation of the host and the chalice represent?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

privation
conciliate
homage
perpetually
diptych

Discussion question

'When the priest repeats the words of Christ at the Last Supper...the bread and wine become Our Lord's Body and Blood.' Why do you think that the actions and words of the Canon are 'prescribed', meaning that they cannot be changed? What might happen if a priest *did* change them?

Memorisation/handwriting

“Sing, O my tongue, the mystery of the glorious Body, and the precious Blood, which the King of all nations shed as the price of the world.”

Extension question

In your missal, find the prayer which begins with the word '*Communicantes*' (it is a few pages after the *Sanctus*). From this prayer, can you list the names of five popes, a bishop, a deacon and five lay persons who were all martyred in the first 350 years of the Church's life?

CHAPTER V

THE MASS OF THE FAITHFUL

Part 3 The Sacrifice ('Consecration ' and 'offering')

1. What three words does the priest use to describe the offerings of bread and wine?
2. What do you notice about the priests fingers after he has held the Sacred Host?
3. At the offering, what three words does the priest use to describe Christ, the Victim?
4. Find the meaning of the words '*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*'

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

invocation
venerable
appease
tranquil
plenitude
admonish

Discussion question

Some people think that if they only receive the Sacred Host at Mass and not the Precious Blood, then they have not fully received Jesus. Why is this wrong?

Memorisation/handwriting

“What is now in the chalice is the Blood of Christ, the very same that dropped down on Golgotha, bathing the wood of the Holy Cross.”

Extension question

Write briefly about the sacrifices of Abraham and Melchisedech (use these scripture references to help you: Genesis 22: 1-19, Genesis 14: 18-20 and Hebrews 7:1- 3). Can you think of any ways in which these earlier sacrifices resembled that of Christ?

CHAPTER V

THE MASS OF THE FAITHFUL

Part 4 Peace

1. Of what is the Mass of the Faithful a copy?
2. For what is the priest primarily asking for during this part of the Mass?
3. What do these words mean? "*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*"
4. With what words does the priest give Holy Communion to each person?

Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of the following words

undertone
profound
commingling
sublime
aslant
ineffable

Discussion question

Why is it that, after he has received the Sacred Host, the priest is so careful to brush the paten over the chalice?

Memorisation/handwriting:

“Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”

Extension question

Write out as much of the Last Gospel as you can in your neatest writing (at least the first few lines). Take your time and think carefully about the words.