

*...until his presence
is fully revealed within you*



Entering Into
The Cosmic Mass

THE MYSTERY OF THE MASS

These words are intended to assist you to enter into the experience of participating fully in the mystery of this Mass.

The power of the gifts of the bread and wine available to you through this service can only be gained through your soul's response, that is, through your direct experience of the Mass. Only in this way can you gain knowledge - which means gnosis - a deep inner knowing of what you witness and participate of in the Cosmic Mass.

The outer form of our Cosmic Mass may be familiar to you (although the words will be different) and this may engender a response from you of "Oh no!" Or, it may stir some deep memory of love and longing that will enfold you throughout the Mass. Or, you may not have had any experience of a Mass (or Eucharist as it is also known) in any form whatever and may find it strange and unfamiliar. You may have feelings of disquiet. Your initial response may swing between a longing to embrace the light and love that flows from the altar, to a tense and uncomfortable feeling in your body for reasons you cannot understand. You are, after all, participating in or witnessing the deepest and most profound of mysteries.

As the mystery of the Eucharist unfolds over time do not be surprised if you find your responses to it change: negative responses may change to positive ones, and vice versa. If your response is to flee it could indicate as deep a connection to spirit as the feeling of awe and wonder that, finally, you are home at last. Whatever your response:

*Let it be so.
A mystery needs to unfold, as does a budding rose.
This takes time.*

PARTICIPATING IN THE MASS

We celebrate this Mass not only for those assembled together, but also with and on behalf of the universe. It is cosmic in its outreach, for Christ's death and resurrection affects all beings visible and invisible. We believe this sacrament which commemorates his body and blood has its effects far beyond the place where it is celebrated.

Receiving communion is one way you can participate in the Mass. You are free to partake of the sacrament of the bread (Christ's substance that provides strength and nourishment) and the wine (a powerful symbol of the life-giving spirit of Christ). These gifts are freely available to those who seek transformation.

Another form of participation is to repeat with us the words 'So shall it be'. These words are simply a modern version of 'Amen'. In speaking these words you affirm the prayers the priest offers to the spiritual worlds as a response from your own soul. Other prayers are said together by the whole congregation. Sometimes there is a dialogue between the celebrant and congregation. And there are songs to sing and listen to. Your voice is an important way of participating in the service. Or, you may choose to simply listen in a focused way. It is possible to pay attention in a relaxed manner, and in so doing allow the words and the feelings to enter and let your soul respond in that way.

In walking the path to Christ, be assured you will be given aid, comforted, succored, on your journey. Through your participation and response to the Mass you are given the strength, courage, steadfastness and orientation, as well as companions for this journey to return from whence you came – your spiritual home.

Let it be so.

A mystery needs to unfold, as does a budding rose.

This takes time.

THE CHALICE PRAYER

(One of the prayers of the Mass which is repeated together.)

Father,

to you we raise our whole being,
a vessel emptied of self;
accept, O Lord, this our emptiness,
and fill us with yourself,
your life, your light, your love,
that these your gracious gifts
may radiate through us
and overflow the chalice of our hearts
into the hearts of all with whom
we come in contact,
revealing unto them
the beauty of your joy and wholeness
and the serenity of your peace
which nothing can destroy.

THE SYMBOLS IN THE MASS

Through the symbolism and ritual of the Mass you are able to experience the presence of the living Christ, and the Mass is therefore an important way of nurturing the Christ life within you. The church through the centuries has used rituals to convey spiritual truth. Our church has taken these ancient rituals which are great sources of power and strength, revived their inner meaning and reinterpreted them so that they speak to people of today.

All the elements used in the service are for the purpose of helping you move to a higher level of consciousness. As the Mass is essentially a mystery, its meaning cannot be fully expressed in words or understood through the rational mind.

The altar not only represents your physical body, but it is also the doorway or threshold to the world of spirit from the world of matter. The altar is a symbol of yourself - where humanity and God



join together, where the physical and spiritual meet - and it is the dominant feature in our Mass.

In the centre of the altar (in the centre of your holy body) sit the veiled elements and implements used in the consecration of the bread and the wine. These represent and symbolise the holy of holies, that which is most sacred, and the great mystery of taking into yourself the body and blood of Christ, his substance and spirit.

The candles symbolise and represent your seven spiritual centres (you might be more familiar with the term 'chakras') and all that these pertain to. As more of Christ's light enters these centres, they are illuminated and changed to accommodate the life and love of the Beloved. Viewed from left to right the candles represent a progression from your feet to your head. The central candle symbolises your heart and the risen Christ. (No crucified Christ appears on our altar.) Candlelight is pure light, reaching and illuminating the darkness and has an effect on our feeling levels.

Colour, flowers and music (both vocal and instrumental) are also used to create responses and feelings within which assist in opening you to the working of higher beings that are present in the celebration of the Mass.

You will probably notice the different colours of our gowns: our priests wear maroon gowns, deacons are in pink gowns and serve at the altar, our initiates, in blue, assist in the healing ministry and also act as ushers and assistants for some of our services. Other special vestments in a variety of colours are worn in the celebration of a Mass that is being held for a particular purpose. So, if your first encounter with The Centre is during a major spiritual festival such as Easter, Pentecost, St John's Tide, Michaelmas or Christmas, the Mass you experience will be more full, in both the physical and spiritual sense.

THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE MASS

The Mass moves through four stages, just a glimpse of which is offered here to assist you to enter into this sacrament.

The Proclamation is the name given to the first part of the Mass and its purpose is to awaken you to the spiritual worlds and to your own true being, and to listen to the message that comes to you from these realms. These messages come in the form of a scripture reading and teaching through the words of the address.

In the opening responses, affirmations and singing you can lift yourself into a higher level of consciousness and open yourself to hear the voice of Christ.

The second stage is called The Offering. It begins with these words:

*By the mystery of this water and wine
may we come to share
in the total divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.*



These words acknowledge Christ's offering of himself for the life of the world, and you too may respond inwardly by offering yourself to be part of his great redeeming work. To be set aside from a common use to a sacred use.

During the unveiling of the elements of the bread and wine we prepare to sacrifice and offer our lower selves, ideals, wishes and wants to the higher self - the reality of our divine being.

The pouring of the wine into the chalice symbolises the pouring of spirit into your soul. The bread symbolises the substance of Christ that you take into your body at communion, which sustains you.

Incense is a symbol of purification, adoration and praise and is visibly shown in the censuring of the altar, the elements and you who offer yourself.

The third stage is The Consecration. The priest uses the ancient words of consecration "This is my body" and "This my blood", and through these words something happens that the rational mind cannot fathom. Whatever is of the earth has the presence of Christ in it, but in the act of consecration at the hands of an ordained priest there is a change that takes place in the host and the wine. It is not a change that is visible to the eye.

You are reminded that you are to partake of the elements "in remembrance of him." Through the effects of the sacrament, memory is re-awakened within you – the memory of who you are and the knowledge of what you are to become when his presence is fully revealed within you.

The fourth and final part of The Mass is The Communion. Each person must come forward individually to receive the elements of Christ's body and blood for you must make an individual response to the Christ. That is the only criterion for receiving communion in The Independent Church of Australia (wherever in the world you

find it). Partaking of the bread and wine is open to all people, including children and babes in arms when they reach voluntarily for the host.

As you take the bread and wine into your body, you take Christ within you until every part of you pulsates with his life. In the act of communion you acknowledge the longing within your soul to unite with the Christ.

The benediction is a sending forth into the world. It is good to come together, to meditate, reflect and worship. But your life is in the world, and it is there you must express your individuality and the Christ life in you. Jesus Christ lived among real people with physical, emotional and spiritual scars and he brought light and healing to them. And so can you if you wish to become a co-worker of Christ.

THE WHOLE OF THE COSMIC MASS IS A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

The repetition of the words, the responses, the incense, the whole drama of the liturgy is a call to your spiritual consciousness to leave behind for a moment intellectual reflection and enter the realm of spirit which is your true home.

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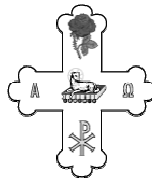
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