

THE BEAUTY OF THE MASS—Part 7

How do we make Sufficient Preparation for the Mass? There are many ways that we can prepare ourselves for the Eucharist. For example, have we fasted from food and drink for one hour before the Mass? Canon 919 of the Code of Canon Law says if we want to receive the Eucharist, we must fast for one solid hour from all food and drink, except water and medication. By the way, that includes gum or coffee. Obviously, if you are sick or unable to fast for a medical reason, then this rule does not apply to you.

Have we taken the time to read the Sunday readings, either by ourselves or together as a family, before Sunday Mass? Each week, before Sunday Mass, we should take the time to read and reflect on the Scripture readings for that Sunday. We should ponder on what God is telling us personally through His life-giving Word.

When we come into this house of worship, we are entering a holy place. It is the living room of God's family. At the doors of the Church, we can see little bowls containing holy water. These are called holy water fonts. For centuries, it has been a tradition that, as we enter God's house, we dip our fingers in the holy water and bless ourselves with the sign of the cross. This sacred gesture reminds us of our Baptism when we first were initiated into the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection. Our baptism is completed in the Holy Eucharist where that Paschal Mystery is made fully present on the altar, and hopefully, in us, as well.

Since the 11th century, we also have had the tradition of genuflecting to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle before entering the pew. This gesture comes from feudal ceremonials and it signifies giving homage and adoration to the real, divine presence of our Lord, the King of all Kings, in the Blessed Sacrament.

We genuflect by bending the right knee to the floor and rising up again. Everyone should genuflect unless he or she is physically unable to do so! The document *Eucharistiae Sacramentum* states: "*Genuflection on one knee is prescribed before the Blessed Sacrament whether it be reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for public adoration in the monstrance.*"

Have we prepared ourselves well by being in the state of grace? Under ordinary circumstances, if we have committed a mortal sin, we must not receive Communion until we have gone to Confession.