

Being thankful

As well as examining ourselves and being sorry for any shortcomings, it also helps to remember that since we last came to church there have been good things and we must not forget them. Sometimes we have forgotten that there have been good things, things for which we need to say 'thank you'. These things can only have come from God or been given by him. We need to cultivate saying thank you and being grateful. We like being in the company of grateful people who appreciate and value others. We should come to God with the same heart and mind. Reading St Luke's gospel 17: 11-19 might help.

My intention

I have come to church to worship God. But I have also come for a reason – with an intention – a purpose. Perhaps I am here to pray for someone who cannot get here and who is in need or sick or about whom I am anxious. Perhaps I am here because it is the anniversary of the death of one of my family or a friend. Perhaps I am concerned about one of my parents or my children. Whatever I have come to offer the sacrifice for is my intention.

The Offertory



As the bread and wine are placed on the altar I remember my intention. Silently I watch the offertory happening. There in the bread and wine are my joys and sorrows, my work, my good

and bad days. They are there waiting to be caught up in the Sacrifice Jesus offers to his Father and in which we are found acceptable.



St Augustine once said in a homily,
"There you are on the altar, there you are in the chalice".

Being more focused on God I will be much less likely to be distracted by others and I shall be less of a distraction myself. I will have helped to foster an atmosphere of prayer in which to grow in the Christian life.

*"As watchmen look for the morning
so do we look for you, O Christ.
Come with the dawning of the day
and make yourself known to us
in the breaking of bread."*

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Saint George Hanworth Park

PREPARING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

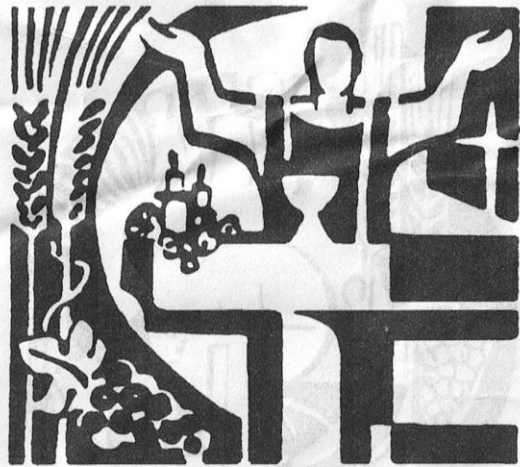


"O come to my heart Lord Jesus..."

"O God, to whom every heart is open, every desire known and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily praise your holy name. Amen"

"Give us grace to perceive you, diligence to see you, patience to wait for you." St Benedict

Say these prayers slowly, a few words at a time before Mass. It is well to stop after every few words so that they sink into the heart.



To help prepare to receive Holy Communion and make the most of the presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, this list of suggestions is offered.

Fasting

Many Anglo-Catholics follow the rule of fasting for at least an hour before Mass. Fasting is a time honoured Christian ritual. It is an act of sacrifice and when we fast and experience hunger, we are reminded of God and His sacrifice for us. While fasting denies the flesh comfort, it feeds the spirit strength. It's a way to get our desire out of the way in order to allow the spirit to work (Acts 13:1-3). Fasting should be done sincerely and privately to be a pleasing sacrifice to God.

Arriving in time

It is important that we do not cheat ourselves of the precious time we need to prepare. Equally, it is discourteous to God and to fellow worshippers.

Lighting a candle

This can help as a way of preparation. It reminds us that we are part of a Church far greater than we can see; most of which is in heaven. We are surrounded by a cloud of unseen witnesses – the saints who support us with their prayers.

Silence

Making space for God by simply being quiet. Remembering quietly that he is what matters most in our lives. Being open and receptive to what he has to give and to say to us.

Others

It's good to remember that other people around us are preparing too. They are focusing on and concentrating on God. They are asking God to help them to be open and receptive as he comes to them in word and sacrament. They are doing the same as we might be, but in slightly different ways – ways which are appropriate to them.

Examining myself

We need space to look back over the time since we last came to church. In the light of God's love (and the way he has taught us to love), we need to examine ourselves. We need to have something with which to clothe the 'sorry prayers' (the penitential rite, at the beginning of Mass). To come with sorrow for our shortcomings and sins helps us to approach God with the right attitude. Perhaps from time to time we can read Luke 18.9-14.

Reading God's word

If we can, it is good to read the scripture readings before the service begins. To read the first two readings and gospel slowly, and to ponder them is good. This would be a preparation before we hear them read in the Spirit-filled community of our Church during the Mass itself.

