

ST VINCENT'S LENTEN TALKS 2026

THE MASS UNFOLDED

THE PARTS OF THE MASS - INTRODUCTORY RITES AND
THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The third talk moved from theology to practice, exploring how the Mass actually unfolds. Having reflected in previous talks on the meaning of the Eucharist in Scripture and tradition, this session focused on the concrete elements that shape the celebration of the Mass today.

The starting point was the physical setting of the liturgy. At the centre stands the altar, traditionally made of stone and consecrated by a bishop with sacred oil. Often it contains a relic of a saint, recalling the early Christian practice of celebrating the Eucharist over the tombs of martyrs. The altar is covered with linen cloths and accompanied by candles and a crucifix, reminding the faithful that the Mass is inseparable from Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

Several sacred objects are also used in the liturgy. The chalice, the patten. The Missal contains the prayers of the Mass and the Lectionary contains the Scripture readings. Other items such as the corporal, purificator, and pall are simple linen cloths. Even the bread and wine themselves have clear requirements: unleavened bread made from wheat and wine fermented from grapes.

The vestments worn by the priest also have historical roots. The alb, stole, and chasuble were originally ordinary garments in the Roman world but gradually became distinctive signs of sacred ministry. Their colours change with the seasons of the Church's year: green for Ordinary Time, purple for Advent and Lent, red for Pentecost and martyrs, and white for the great feasts of Christmas and Easter. The Introductory Rites begin as the priest enters and the Mass opens with the sign of the Cross. The greeting, "The Lord be with you," is an ancient expression of Christian faith and mutual recognition of the Lord's presence among the assembled community. The Penitential Rite follows, inviting worshippers to acknowledge their sins and ask God's mercy so that they may enter the sacred mysteries with humility. The Kyrie ("Lord, have mercy") is one of the Church's most ancient prayers.

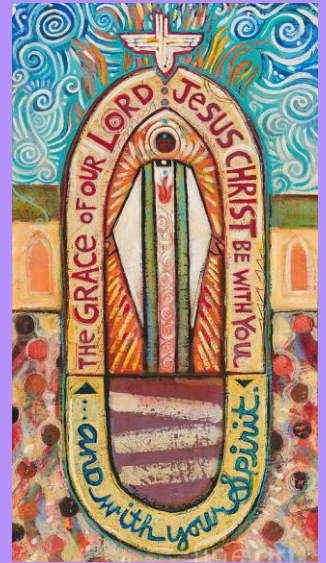
On Sundays and feast days the Gloria is sung or recited, an early Christian hymn of praise echoing the angels' song at the birth of Christ. The Collect then gathers the prayers of the community into a single petition offered by the priest on behalf of all.

The Liturgy of the Word forms the next part of the Mass. On Sundays the readings usually include a passage from the Old Testament, a psalm, a New Testament epistle, and the Gospel. These follow a three-year cycle so that the faithful hear a broad range of Scripture over time. After the readings, the homily helps explain the Scriptures and apply them to daily life.

The section concludes with the Creed, a personal profession of faith shared by the whole Church, and the Prayers of the Faithful, where the community intercedes for the needs of the Church and the wider world. In this way the Mass reminds believers that their worship is never isolated from the concerns of humanity.



Watch a recording of the talks by scanning this QR code.



"For if the Holy Spirit was not in the common father and teacher... you would not all have answered: 'And with your Spirit'".

St John Chrysostom



'Kyrie, Eleison: 'Lord soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain, show me your steadfast love.'

The last three talks will continue to focus on parts of the Mass itself.

Join us in the Conference Centre this Tuesday 17th March where we will be exploring the 'Creed, Offertory & Eucharistic Prayer'.

7pm - 8.30pm

Speaker: Robin Maxted