

Church, but one distinct from that of men.

Wearing a hat or veil is an Apostolic custom, as we learn from St. Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:3-16). He strongly denounces the Christian women at Corinth for presuming to come to church unveiled, accusing them of pride and arrogance unsuited to their sex. For he argues that by nature and God's law, woman is subject to her husband, and that the wearing of a veil is a sign of her dependence. "the head of a woman is her husband"; "but woman is the glory of man"; "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man" (vv. 3, 7, 9). To pray in church unveiled is insulting to the angels: "That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels" (v. 10), and equivalent to having a shaved head (v. 5), a custom followed only by slaves in Greece, and by dancers and prostitutes in Rome. After discussing this matter at some length, he ends by saying: "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (v. 16). That is, if you cannot follow my subtle reasoning, let this suffice that you are going counter to the practice of all other churches.

Suffice to say that the veil, in this way of thinking, is a symbol of the divine hierarchy established in the relationship of men and women in the bond of matrimony that Paul describes in New Testament terms so beautifully in Ephesians chapter 5:22-30:

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such

thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body".

Married women should wear black head coverings and single women white, signifying purity. One benefit is that the men in the congregation will be able to tell at a glance which of the lovely ladies might be available.

### Conclusion

In the Mass Christ has come down again and dwelt among us, on the altar and in our hearts, in order to make us more fully sons and daughters of God. We in turn must *Live the Catholic Life!* When you strive for holiness and spiritual perfection in your own life, it becomes apparent to others and they will be drawn to Christ through you. True Catholic Christians radiate a sense of peace and joy, which comes from the grace received through the proper reception of the sacraments.

When we receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist we receive infinite grace. But the operation of that grace in our lives is limited by the degree to which we are in submission to Christ. He wants all of us, all of the time, not just part of us, some of the time. Proper reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is the key to holiness. Holiness is the key to heaven.

### The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: [evangelization@earthlink.net](mailto:evangelization@earthlink.net)

[www.evangelizationstation.com](http://www.evangelizationstation.com)

Telephone: 209-728-5598

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## Preparing for Mass

Victor R. Claveau, MJ

Germain Grisez, in his *Living a Christian Life* asks: What is one's chief responsibility in regard to worship? He answers this question by saying: One should participate devoutly in the Eucharist:

"Reverent participation," he says, "respects the holiness of the Eucharist. While an excessively formal attitude of reverence and awe toward the sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of Communion might reflect and foster inappropriate fear of God and self-depreciation, a casual attitude of relaxed informality during the Eucharist can reflect and foster forgetfulness of God's holiness and a lack of humility before him. Therefore, appropriate behavior is important in order to manifest and foster the reverence due the holy sacrifice and Holy Communion."

In other words, there should be a balance between proper fear of the Lord and proper worship of the Lord. One's attitude toward Mass should be one of positive, rather than anxious, anticipation.

If the sun rose only one day per year everyone would consider it to be a very special occasion and eagerly look forward to that day. But of course it rises every day and we take it for granted and pay little attention to it. Yet, if the sun failed to rise, even for a few days, what a dismal place the earth would be; the same can be said if the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass were not celebrated daily.

Msgr. Romano Guardini, wrote a wonderful book entitled *Meditations before Mass*, (now published by Sophia Institute Press under the title: *Preparing yourself for Mass*), which I strongly recommend. In his book, Msgr. Guardini writes:

"What is needed here is *personal* preparation for Holy Mass. This requires not only Mass

*preparation* in the usual sense of the individual believer strengthening his faith, purifying his heart, arranging and directing his intentions, but also the fundamental, vital attitude absolutely necessary to transform a collection of individuals into a congregation, and a restless crowd into a *holy people* in the sight of God.”

The celebration of Mass is not something that should be improvised on the spot. Consider preparing for Mass the evening before. Make certain all necessary preparations have been made, concerning dress, transportation, etc. Get out your Bible or Sunday Missal and review the readings for the Mass. Such preparation for Mass is very important as well as fruitful, because it shows us the prime value of the Mass and compels us to study the dogmas of our Faith, for which the Mass is the rallying point: The Trinity, the Incarnation, Redemption, grace and glory.

### **Eucharistic Fast**

Whatever deserves doing at all, deserves doing well. If there is any act, which calls for serious preparation, it certainly is the reception of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

For the worthy reception and fruitful Communion, two dispositions are necessary: those of the soul and those of the body; because Communion is the food of the soul through the body. Both should be fit to receive our Lord.

From the physical standpoint, two things are required: The eucharistic fast, and a modest and reverent exterior.

The precept to observe the eucharistic fast is a serious obligation founded in the tradition of the Church and based upon due reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. In the context of contemporary legislation very slight violations with regard to the quantity of food or drink or to the time element (unless done out of deliberate irreverence or of contempt) are not serious sins and thus of

themselves do not preclude the reception of Communion.

The eucharistic fast was formerly much more strict. At the present time the Code of Canon Law requires:

“One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion” (Can. 919). “Those who are advanced in age or who suffer from any infirmity, as well as those who take care of them, can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have taken something during the previous hour” (Can 919 §3).

By requiring this slight mortification, the Church wishes to invite us to make an effort, a sacrifice, and to teach us that spiritual food ought to come before material food. Is not Jesus more important? We should seek Him before anything else.

The purpose of this reminder of the penitential aspect of the eucharistic fast is to bring home again to the communicant the full significance of the Eucharistic Mystery celebrated in memory of Christ’s passion.

### **Proper Attire**

The fact that this subject should even be mentioned, is an indictment on our sociological norms in America. If you were to examine any book on the Mass written prior to Vatican Council II, the subject of proper dress would generally be conspicuously absent. Catholics always wore their “Sunday best.” Today, it seems as if anything goes; t-shirts, tank-tops, jeans, shorts, tennis shoes, low-cut or tight fitting dresses, etc.

We are attending a banquet, not a Bar-B-Q and should dress accordingly. As a matter of fact, a good rule of thumb would be if you could go to a picnic without first changing your clothes, you are probably improperly dressed for Mass.

Section 1387 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church simply states: “Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.”

Some people say that it does not matter how a person is dressed, that what matters is the disposition of one’s heart. On the other hand, if one has proper disposition they will want to show respect for God’s house, and more importantly, for His Eucharistic Presence in the tabernacle.

We are attending a heavenly banquet and our attire should demonstrate our belief. Even the poorest individual can purchase items of clothing from a thrift store, which would be more appropriate than casual clothing.

No article of clothing worn should distract others from the central act of worship. Those who serve in the sanctuary have an even greater responsibility as the congregation will be attentive, not only to their manner, but also to their dress and should not be distracted. Common sense should be the rule. People participating in the Eucharist celebration should dress modestly, and in their best attire.

Psalms 96, verse 9, sums it perfectly: “Worship the Lord in holy array; tremble before him, all the earth!”

### **Why Women Cover their Heads in church?**

The veil is simply a symbol of reverence, which recommends itself on very many levels. Can. 1262.2 of the 1917 Code of Canon law said that women must cover their heads “...especially when they approach the holy table”. But the 1983 Code is silent about this tradition.

This does not mean that the use of the veil is not to be observed or is simply an outdated custom, for the veil has roots in Scripture and Tradition as well.

Christianity has much to say about the dignity of women and their role in the family and in society; women also have an important role in the