

## The Ordinariate Liturgy: Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Is this way of celebrating the Mass approved by the Vatican?**

A: Yes. In English-speaking countries, the Roman/Latin rite of the Catholic Church exists in three forms: the ordinary form (the novus ordo), the extraordinary form (celebrated in Latin), and Anglican Use. Because we are a congregation of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter (the Anglican Ordinariate), we use the Anglican Ordinariate Liturgy of the Latin rite. This way of celebrating the Mass was approved, most recently and definitively, by Pope Francis in 2013 following the principles established in Pope Benedict's November 2009 apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

**Q: Why does the priest often have his back to the congregation?**

A: Since our Lord's presence at the altar is the focus of the Mass, it is not so much that the priest has his back to the people, but that all face the altar together in joint prayer and adoration. In other words, the priest faces the altar when speaking to God with the people or on the people's behalf, and faces the congregation when speaking to the people on God's behalf. This ancient practice can help the congregation know who is being addressed at any given moment.

**Q: Why is the language so formal?**

A: The language is formal because our texts were translated from the Latin in 16th century England when there was a sense of "the King's English." (Think Shakespeare.) We believe that God is truly present in the Eucharist and it seems fitting to address the King of the universe as reverently as we know how. The elevated language also helps raise the hearts and minds of priest and people into the life of God.

**Q: Why is there such frequent kneeling and bowing?**

A: We desire to worship God with all that we are. Therefore, we bring to our Lord not only our souls, but also our bodies. We bow to honor our Lord's name and the Trinity and we genuflect as a gesture of reverence for the Incarnation and the Blessed Sacrament. The Sign of the Cross is closely tied to baptism and is made to help us remember that we belong to Christ.

**Q: Why are certain prayers and responses sung?**

A: Speech is not as beautiful as song. When we celebrate the Mass we want to offer to God our best and most beautiful. The practice goes back to the very earliest days of the Church.

**Q: Why is incense used?**

A: From ancient times, the burning of incense has been used to honor important visitors by sweetening the air for their arrival. It was also used in various religions (including the Old Covenant) as a sacrificial offering to God. We believe that God literally (body, soul, and divinity) comes to the bread and wine at the altar and that, through them, He comes to us when we receive the Eucharist. We use incense to sanctify the altar, the bread and wine, and the people for His visit.