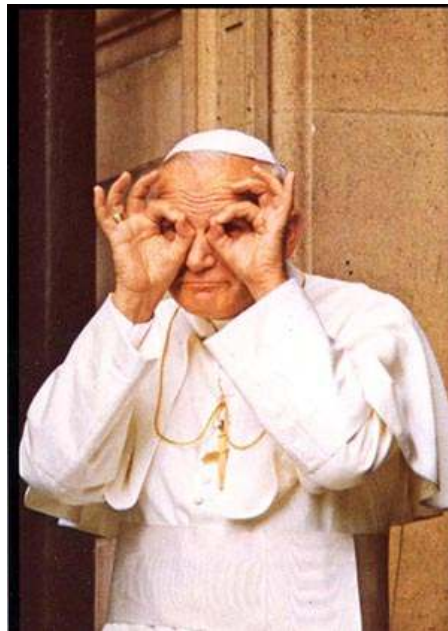




**Father Smith's
Irreverent Guide
on how to be a
Perfectly Reverent
Church-goer**

Ad usum privatum



What should I wear?

Catholics are very fashion-conscious. At baptism, we are given a white robe as a symbol of purity and we are told to keep it unstained until Jesus comes back for us. Whenever we come to Holy Mass, we should make sure our baptismal robe is sparkling white. If we have committed a mortal sin, **sacramental confession** is the best way to get that robe in shape for the Lamb's Supper! When we are getting ready for Mass though, not only our spiritual garments should be in tip-top shape. We should always dress with **decorum and modesty**. Shorts are for surf-boards, not pews; and our young ladies who are off to the disco after church should leave their tankinis and other revealing clothing for another occasion. Besides, does anybody want to see all of that anyway?

Going to the chapel and I'm gonna . . .

Worship the Most Holy Trinity in spirit and in truth. Families can make the ride to church a fun and an educational one. Each person can come up with an intention to pray for at Mass. Memorize a Bible verse for the ride and see on the way home if you've remembered it! Make the transition from the "real world" to the **realm of the spirit**. Oh, and make sure to leave in plenty of time for Mass (and go to the bathroom first!). Only you know how much time you need!

Doors open, hearts too

You'll need your keys to get back into the car after Mass, but you can leave that pesky **cell phone** in the car because you won't need it. Unless you're a doctor, and with all that school, you should be able to find **vibrate mode** with no problem! When we open the Royal Doors into the church, we go from **chronos** (chronological time) to **kairos** (encounter with God who is outside of space and time), so take off your **watch** – time flies when you're praying. Make sure to pick up a **bulletin** and any **music aids** you might need for Mass! Forget your envelope? Go back!!!!

When in doubt, genuflect

That's what we tell our altar servers all the time. When we enter the church building, we remind ourselves of the sacrament by which we enter into Holy Mother Church and we take **holy water** with our right hand and make a reverent slow **sign of the Cross** with our right hand. Get the kids to do it, too! Scope out the right place to sit, and go to it. Since you left early for Mass to spend some time with Christ in prayer, you'll find exactly the seat you want. Before you enter the pew, make an act of reverence for Our LORD present in the Most Blessed Sacrament in the **tabernacle**. Go down on your right knee, an action which is called a **genuflection**. And if those knees just aren't what they used to be, then a **profound bow** of the body is in order. Have to salute the Captain of our souls right!

Scoping out the right place

Kids are wiggly, and so are some grown-ups, too! Our parish has two **Quiet Rooms** in case of need; they are easy to find. Parents with little ones should be seated at the ends of the pews closest to **escape routes** for when baby is ready to tell you (and everyone else) that he's hungry! Our more seasoned worshippers and those with special needs should find the place most appropriate for them. Oh yeah, and did you **go to the bathroom?** Go now, or forever hold your . . .

Pray hard

Ah, heaven. That's what church is supposed to be – where heaven meets earth. And the only thing that could make it the other place is if you don't do what you're supposed to do! Mass is a time for **prayer**. Kneeling in adoration of the King of Kings and spending time with Him: that's the most precious part of your week. Mark your **hymnal** with the hymns for Mass. Ready, set, we're off!

But I don't know how to sing!

What do you think those lips are for? Just talking? Your voice was given to you by God to praise Him. Listen to the **verses, sing each one** and think about what you're singing. The prayers: are you off to the Indy 500 or are you praying? Slow, reverent, thoughtful prayer in tune with everyone else: that's how to make the roof come down with Holy Ghost power at Mass! Mass has begun; the heavens are opened to shower blessings down on you. Are you prepared to receive them?

What's up with the Latin?

The word Catholic means "universal." We are members of the largest church in the world, and everyone is welcome. **Sensitivity** to others means that we use an **international** language for some of our prayers. Learning **Latin is fun**; we can sing the same parts of the Mass that all the saints did and we sing the same hymns that are sung all over the world. Don't be afraid! Listen and repeat. It's like a holy Berlit lesson during church!

Listen and learn

We should always be as **quiet as a church mouse** whenever we are in church. I can see how my friend's operation went after Mass and make lunch plans in the parking lot. Jesus wants to spend time with us, so why waste that precious time talking to other people? God has written us a whole library of good books called the **Bible**. You have one at home (don't you?) and have already prayed through the readings for Sunday. Now it's time to listen and learn! Take notes if you need to. Homily? I saw that stopwatch! You can remember that Father's homily was 17 minutes and 3 seconds last week; can you remember what he said?

The best gifts come in small packages

Not the small gifts come in the best packages. You have already decided with your family about your **stewardship**, so make sure you've got that envelope ready when the collection plate is passed. Your sacrificial gift may be wrapped just in a piece of paper with a number on it, but that gift, every Sunday proves you were at Mass - stand up and be counted – and that the **ministry** of

Good Eats

The healthiest food in the world? The Eucharist. The fount of immortality. We are invited to partake of the Lamb's Supper, but only if we have our baptismal robe on. Are we free from **mortal sin**? Is my life coherent with the teaching of Christ and His Church and am I not excluded from the Altar because of some situation in my life? Then, please come forward. **Eyes downcast** out of reverence, we come in procession to greet our LORD, stopping to bow or genuflect before we receive the Author of Life. The Church's traditional mode of reception is on the tongue; if we receive on our hands, we do so with one hand crossed over the other and transfer the Sacred Host to our mouths right in front of the priest or communion minister. Moms and dads with babes in arms, be sure to receive on the tongue: one handed communion is dangerous! Make your way back to the pew to be absorbed in prayer. No need to look around you. You have **Jesus inside!**

The Mass is ended, but don't go just yet

You know who left the Last Supper early? Judas. And we know what happened to him! Maybe if he stayed for the announcements and read the bulletin, he wouldn't have betrayed Our LORD. Hmm. We still have to make a proper **thanksgiving**; after all, when the last bite of a meal is finished, do we rush out the door? No; we linger far after the meal is over, to spend time with loved ones and friends. Mass is just like that, too. Spend some time afterwards and see how your spiritual life soars! Then go over to the Social Hall to **socialize** and see how your friends are!

The party's not over yet . . .

Jesus waits for us in the tabernacle and in our parish we have the great opportunity to be with him in the **Adoration Chapel** 24/7. Bring your Bible, a pillow if you need it, and your Rosary beads (got to spend time with Momma, too!) and spend an hour with Him. The more you spend time in prayer, the more alive you will be in the LORD. Be **generous**; give it all!

Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated,
I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed
Sacrament....There you will find romance, glory, honor, fidelity, and the
true way of all your loves upon earth, and more than that: death:
by the divine paradox, that which ends life, and demands the surrender
of all, and yet by the taste (or foretaste)
of which alone can what you seek in your earthly relationships
(love, faithfulness, joy) be maintained, or take on that complexion of
reality, of eternal endurance, that every man's heart desires.
- *JRR Tolkien in a letter to his son*