

Mass Etiquette: Things to Do and Not Do in Mass to Help You and Others

We have an awesome community here at St. John Neumann Church. Attending Mass at our parish is always uplifting and joyful. We are truly blessed. Here are few church etiquette tips that can help you and help others to fully actualize, appreciate and benefit from the worship experience during Mass.

1. **Fast before Mass.** It is our tradition to fast for at least 1 hour before receiving Holy Communion, so we can physically feel hunger as we spiritually hunger for Christ in the Eucharist. Young children, those of infirm age, and medical conditions are exceptions.
2. **No Food and Drink in Church.** Do not bring in cups of coffee. (Coffee and doughnuts are waiting for you after Mass. Yay!) Exceptions - liquids for infants and toddlers or someone who is ill.
3. **Men, take your hats off in Church.**
4. **Don't chew gum in church.** It breaks your fast, it's distracting, and disrespectful in a house of worship.
5. **Dress modestly and appropriately.** Enough said.
6. **Cell phones should never be used in Mass for calls, emails or texting.** Feel free to use them to take notes during the homily. **No hand-held game devices.**
7. **Arrive at Mass a few minutes early.** It can be difficult to get the kids together on time, and there can be reasons that one is legitimately late. Leave for church 10 to 15 minutes earlier than it takes to get to church. This is a courtesy to all who have arrived on time, so as not to distract them if you arrive late.
8. **Don't sit on the edge of the pew if you sit down before others.** Rather, sit in the middle so others don't have to climb over you. Furthermore – gentlemen offer their seats to any lady, the elderly, or disabled, who might be standing when there is overcrowding.
9. **When we enter and leave Church, genuflect toward the Tabernacle.** Christ is present for our sake. By allowing our right knee to hit the floor, we acknowledge He is our Lord and God, we are not. If someone is physically unable to genuflect, then a bow is sufficient. During Mass, if you pass in front of the altar or tabernacle, bow reverently.
10. **Sit quietly while in church.** Once you enter the sanctuary - it is not the time or place to visit with those around you. If you must talk please do so as quietly and briefly as possible. Remember that your conversation might be disturbing someone who is in prayer. We are a very friendly parish; however, let's take our conversations before and after Mass outside the main sanctuary of the church.
11. **Attending to a crying baby or noisy child.** We have a ton of young families in our parish. Praise God! Every parent knows that sometimes the baby is going to have a bad day. If your child becomes noisy or starts to cry please take them outside the main sanctuary of church and into the gathering space (lobby), but also remember to come back into the church as soon as you can. There is no reason to be embarrassed about having to quiet your child in the back of the church. We love you and your children, but we also want to be conscious of all our parishioners as they attempt to worship at Mass.

12. **Participation at Church.** We should always participate at Mass in the prayers and singing. We are not here to observe. We are here to be involved. How can we sing of God in our world, if we won't sing to him in a church? We are all an important part of the celebration of the Mass.
13. **Hospitality.** We have a wonderful and growing community. Always greet new people that you see at church. Let's go out of our way to make them feel welcome and find ways to help them feel comfortable, including encouraging them to become members and get involved – so they can grow with us in the spiritual life. This hospitality extends to the parking lot after Mass, as well! Remain in Christ even as you are trying to get out of the parking lot.
14. **Attention at Mass.** Once Mass begins, our attention should be on the readings in the beginning and on the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer.
15. **Bathrooms.** Little ones might try to develop the habit of using the bathroom to get out of church for a while. Try to have them use it before Mass begins. People should avoid walking around during the homily and the Eucharistic Prayer.
16. **Bow before receiving Holy Communion.** This shows reverence for God before you receive Him into your body.
17. **Say Amen!** When you receive Holy Communion, and the Eucharistic Minister says “The Body of Christ”, respond by saying “Amen”. You are acknowledging your belief that this indeed is the Body of Christ, given freely for your sake.
18. **Do not receive from the chalice if you are sick.** This is an act of charity and kindness to others.
19. **Do not leave early.** It is rude to leave Mass early. We should stay until the end of the recessional and the song that accompanies it. Remember, Judas was the first one to leave Mass early at the Last Supper.
20. **Pray after Mass, if you can.** It is a good tradition, though not required, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving after Mass is over.
21. **Exit the church quietly.** We love when our parishioners visit with each other, but save your conversations for once you are outside of the main sanctuary of the church so you won't disturb others who may want to stay and pray.
22. **Cross yourself with Holy Water on entering and leaving the church.** This is a reminder of our baptism, which makes us members of Christ's Church.

May God bless us all as we continue to worship together at Mass, open our ears and hearts to hear Him in His Word, our bodies and souls to receive him in the Holy Eucharist, and visit with each other as one family while we grow our community and fellowship before and after Mass. Please go to our parish website, under the Mass & Confession link, for a copy of this list.