

# Understanding the Mass

## The Congregation

*Each week, we are explaining the different parts of the Mass - what is in the church, what we use in the Mass, and why (and how) we celebrate Mass the way we do.*

*Today our topic is the **Congregation**.*

As you sit in the pew you have chosen, you will see other people all sitting (or kneeling on the kneelers) around you. All these people - including you and I - are the **congregation** who celebrate Mass with the priest.

The word congregation means “group”. It comes from the Latin word *congregare* (“to collect” or “to gather together”), which in turn comes from combining two other Latin words: *greg* (“flock”) and *con* (“with”).

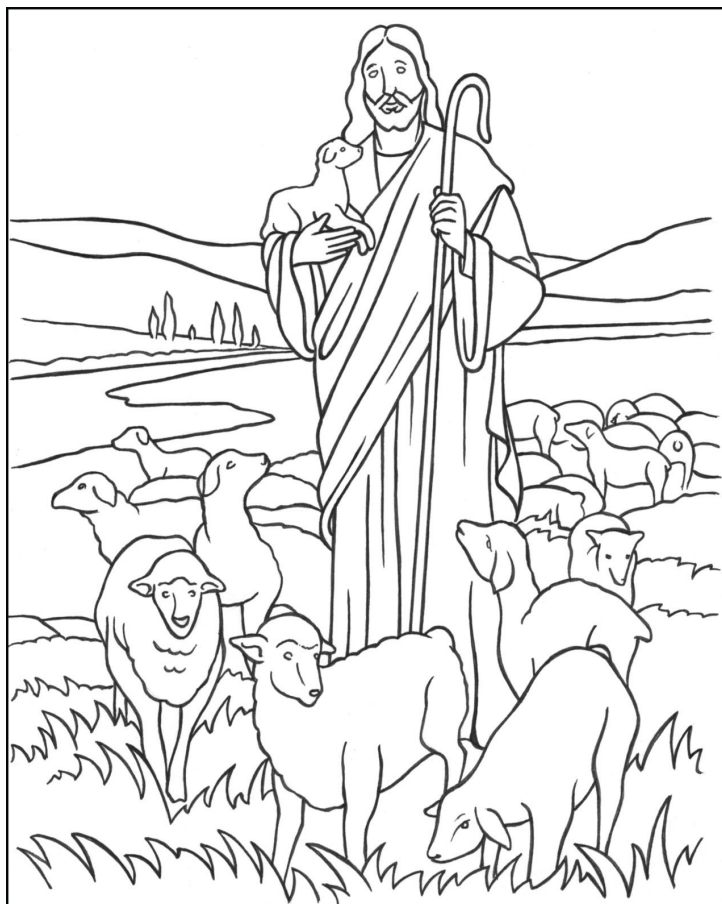
In the Gospel of John, Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd...there will be one flock, one shepherd.” We are all the sheep of God’s flock, and Jesus is our Good Shepherd who gathers us together.

There are a variety of ministries and roles at Mass, and we will explore all of these in the coming weeks.

It is important to remember that when we come together to celebrate the Mass, we do not gather to watch and observe like we would if we went to the cinema or a concert, or if we were at home watching television.

The role of the congregation - all of us - is to participate in the Mass. Our attention and active engagement in the Mass draws from the priest and other ministers the best they have to offer too.

We are called to join in praise and thanksgiving in song. We listen attentively to God’s Word. We pray for the Church, the world and all those in need. We join our prayer to that of the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. And at the end of Mass, we are sent out into the world to act as witnesses to God and His infinite love for us.



<sup>1</sup> *Our Parish Church*, Rev Jude Winkler (1993); *Celebrating the Mass*, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (2005); *Consecrated for Worship*, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (2006); [TheCatholicKid.com](http://TheCatholicKid.com)