

Understanding the Mass

The Greeting

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 **Greeting**.*

After making the Sign of the Cross, the priest and people - all of us - exchange a formal **Greeting** with each other as a mutual acknowledgement (recognition) of the presence of Christ in our midst and as a prayer for His sustaining power.



The priest will start the greeting by saying, “The Lord be with you.”

You will hear this greeting frequently in the Mass. It means many things. Like “good day” it can mean both “hello” and “good-bye.”

These words are both a wish (may the Lord be with you) and a profound statement of faith (as you assemble for worship, the Lord is with you).

These words the priest uses are an ancient biblical greeting: in The Book of Ruth, we read that Boaz returned from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!”

Many people in the Old Testament were greeted by God or by angels with the words “The Lord is with you”, including Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua. And when the angel Gabriel appeared to Our Lady to tell her that she would be the mother of Jesus, his first words were: “Greetings, you who are highly favoured. The Lord is with you.”

When the priest greets us with the words “The Lord be with you”, we are reminded of the calling we all have as God’s children to fulfil the plan He has for us. Each of us has a role no one else can play, in our families, our friendships, our work and our communities.

Our response to this greeting is always the same words. We reply by saying, “And with your spirit,” by which we return the hello, the good wishes, the statement of faith. And we are also recognising the Holy Spirit working through the priest as he celebrates the Mass.

