

The Sacred Heart and St Aldhelm

First time here? Welcome



Some help in understanding our worship.

This church of the Sacred Heart and St Aldhelm is part of the Roman Catholic diocese of Plymouth and belongs to the Roman Catholic Church across the world acknowledging the special role of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. Our Liturgy (worship) is celebrated according to Roman Catholic tradition and ritual.

The main act of worship for us is the **Eucharist**, usually called the Mass by Catholics. In the Mass God's people gather to praise God, to hear God's Word in the Scriptures, to pray for the world, to celebrate the Death and Resurrection of the Lord, to receive Him in Holy Communion, and to be sent into the world to proclaim the faith and serve their brothers and sisters.

On Sundays and important feast days we sing much of the liturgy as a sign of our joy and unity in the Lord. We stand when we pray together as a sign that we are sons and daughters of God and as a sign of our Resurrection in Christ.

Some other points about our liturgy:

STATUES AND PICTURES

Our church is decorated with some fixed pictures and images and often we put up extra hangings and banners to celebrate a particular time in the Church's year. These help us to think of what God has done for us in Jesus and through the saints – just like you might have pictures of people dear to you on your walls at home.

VESTMENTS

The priest, deacon and ministers of the altar dress in vestments to draw our attention to the importance of the liturgy. The colour of the vestments varies with the Church's seasons.

CANDLES and INCENSE

Candles are always signs of Christ "the Light of the World", especially the great Easter Candle which normally stands by the baptismal font, but is more central during Easter time where it is a symbol of the Resurrection. Incense is used as a sign of reverence for a holy place and God's holy people. The Psalms speak of prayer ascending to God like smoke.

BOWING and the SIGN of the CROSS

Bowing is a sign of reverence. We bow to the altar, and to receive God's blessing at the end of mass. You will also see people bowing on one knee (genuflecting) as a special reverence to the tabernacle – the place where the consecrated bread is reserved for the sick and for private prayer. Catholics cross themselves in Church as a sign that they have been ransomed by Christ who died on the cross to save them.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

As Catholics we believe that we share Holy Communion, which is the body and blood of Christ, because we share one common faith. Therefore we ask that only Catholics who are spiritually prepared come to receive Holy Communion. All others are very welcome to come up for a blessing.

OTHER SERVICES

Catholics also gather for worship to pray together Morning or Evening prayer at certain times of the year, or to pray the Rosary (a traditional form of prayer associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus) or the Stations of the Cross, recalling the Passion of Jesus. We also have times of Exposition (silent prayer focussing on the bread consecrated in Mass – which is the body of Christ).

PLEASE: do feel free to ask about our worship, the welcomers at the entrance to the church will be especially happy to explain what we believe and how our worship expresses our faith.

Roman Catholics believe that in worship Jesus Christ becomes truly present to us. He comes to us to comfort us, heal us and strengthen us. Worship is the source and summit of the life of the Church, and the life of each member of the Church, that is why it is so important, and why we take such care to ensure that all can participate as actively and fully as possible

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