

Why does Mass begin with a procession?

The entrance procession has a practical purpose – to get the priest and ministers to the altar, but also symbolic meanings. Envisioning the Church as a people on pilgrimage, a people journeying toward the Promised Land of Heaven, is an honored image used throughout our religious history. During Eucharistic Prayer III, the priest prays that God may “strengthen in faith and love” his “pilgrim Church on earth.” The entrance procession should remind us that we are pilgrims in this life heading for eternity.

In witnessing the entrance procession, we may wish to reflect on our personal journey in relation to the events of scripture. We may recognize that the priest is representing Jesus and the altar to which he leads us represents Heaven.

One particularly important journey in our religious history is the Exodus “procession”. God selected Moses to lead His people through the Red Sea, from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. During the entrance procession we may ask ourselves – “Am I ready to leave my life of sin like the Israelites leaving Egypt so I can enter the Promised Land of Heaven?”

Jesus tells us that He is “the way, the truth and the life.” The procession is a reminder of the invitation we are given to unite in following Jesus. During the entrance procession we may ask ourselves – “Am I ready to believe and follow Jesus and His Church?”

Another biblical image is that of Christ’s “procession” to Golgatha where He would be crucified. In the streets of Jerusalem 2000 years ago, there were many who witnessed this procession. During the entrance procession we may ask ourselves – “Am I ready to follow Jesus wherever He leads me, even to the Cross?”

Although we don’t physically join the procession, it may be helpful to reflect on its meaning as we begin Mass.