Kai: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this special edition of Catholic Central. I'm Kai.

Libby: And I'm Libby, coming to you live from beautiful St. Monica's Church from downtown Santa Monica, California.

Kai: Where the crowds are already gathering. It's the event you've waited for all week.

Libby: Sunday Mass, and it's about to begin, so don't go away. We'll be right back.

All right, everybody, welcome back to Catholic Central.

Kai: Any minute now we'll be seeing the opening move of the form of Catholic worship known as the Mass.

Libby: Or the Eucharistic liturgy.

Kai: Or the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Libby: Or the celebration of the Mass.

Kai: It's all happening at St. Monica's, a great parish. I expect great things.

Libby: And saying the Mass today is Father David Guffey, a Holy Cross priest.

Kai: It's the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time, and Libby, I could not think of a better day to bring our viewers a closer look at this Catholic service that takes place not only weekly, but daily.

Libby: We know some of you are new to this event, so we'll try to keep you informed by going to the history and the meaning behind some of these beautiful rituals.

Kai: We've got a great showing this morning, a full congregation, a well-rehearsed choir. This promises to be a really terrific celebration of the Mass. Okay, everyone's in their seats. The bells are ringing. It's time for the entrance procession. Oh, this crowd knows their stuff, Libby. They're on their feet to show respect for the celebrants as they process down the aisle.

Libby: We've got altar servers looking good today. We've got lectors ready to read the Word, holding it high there, nice and straight, and here's the main player, the presiding priest.

Kai: Everyone takes their assigned seating, and we are ready to begin the Mass with what is called the introductory rites.

Libby: Its purpose is to bring the congregation together, to let go of the cares of the world, to become present before God. But can they do it, Kai?

Kai: The priest gives the greeting with the sign of the cross, which is Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Libby: And now this is where the congregation needs to show they're here to make this happen. You only get out of Mass what you put into Mass.

Kai: And here it is, the Penitential Rite. It's a humbling prayer, Libby, a most important start as they will not be in right relationship with God the Father for the rest of this service if they do not acknowledge what they have done or failed to do.

Libby: Yep. The rest of the Mass really falters if this is not done with commitment.

Kai: But they nailed it. I saw it. The old three strikes of the chest, done with feeling. These folks are publicly sorry for their failings and are ready to praise.

Libby: And just in time, Kai, as the choir's begun the Gloria, glory to God in the highest. This song of the angels is not meant to be mumbled.

Kai: Indeed, Libby, would the shepherds in the fields have heard the angels if they whispered in halfhearted tones? I think not. A beautiful start to this service, a public act of confession, followed by Scriptural words of praise.

Libby: Oh, oh, oh, look, the priest is stepping forward for the Opening Prayer.

Kai: This is, Libby, one of the most ancient parts of the opening rites. It is a deeply thought out prayer to express the theme of this day's literature.

Libby: This and the silences it includes are also known as the Collect because it is intended for the assembly to assemble their thoughts and for the presider to collect these thoughts and prayers, as together they lift them to the Holy Trinity.

Kai: We've entered into the Liturgy of the Word. The first lector approaches the ambo to read from the Bible.

Libby: That's a fancy word. Is that different from pulpit?

Kai: Oh yeah, way different.

Libby: All right, and we're back to the Liturgy of the Word, which on Sunday is made of three readings and a Psalm, thoughtfully put together to reflect a theme. There's something from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a New Testament reading, and ...

Kai: Whoa, hold up, Libby. Looks like everyone's on their feet for ...

Libby: Yep, it's time for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Kai: Reason to stand indeed. And the faithful are singing a big Hallelujah to the word of the Lord.

Libby: Ideally.

Kai: Yeah, ideally.

Libby: While the priest reads the gospel, and only the priest or deacon proclaims the gospel at Mass, let's talk about what's coming up.

Kai: The homily, similar to a sermon, but it is specific and only to address this day's Scriptures.

Libby: Where does the word homily come from?

Kai: I don't know.

Libby: No way to know.

Kai: Having finished the Gospel reading, the priest, or sometimes the deacon, will give us succinct, insightful commentary on that day's readings in the life of the community today.

Libby: Or he might talk for half an hour on giving to the leaky roof fund.

Kai: Or tell jokes from 20 years ago. The point is here, priests are people and they are not all stellar public speakers.

Libby: And the point of Mass is not the homily, it's the communion of us with each other before God.

Kai: And the literal communion, the Eucharist, which Catholics believe is the real presence of Jesus Christ. See our episode on the Eucharist.

Fr. David Guffey: Trusting in God who loves us so very much, I invite you to stand as we profess our faith in God who loves us.

Libby: And look at that, a smooth transition into the Profession of the Faith, which will be either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed.

Kai: Fun fact, Libby, the Creed is pretty much accepted across all Christian denominations.

Libby: Looks like we're getting through the Creed with conviction. Oh, someone forgot consubstantial, so take a point away for that.

Speaker 4: For the Church, that we may be humble before the Lord.

Kai: Though we have made it to the Prayers of the Faithful, prayers that are said for the world, for the church and for the needs of the congregation.

Libby: And I do believe here we are at the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Kai: Never thought we'd make it, Libby.

Libby: And it really looks like the faithful here today have been well-prepared by the introductory prayers, praises, and Holy Scriptures to encounter Jesus in the holy Eucharist.

Kai: This being the central reason and component of the Mass, we might stop here for a quick history lesson.

Libby: Good thinking, Kai. The Mass was instituted by Christ himself at the Last Supper, when ...

Kai: Jesus said, "Take and eat. This is my body."

Libby: And also said, "Do this in memory of me."

Kai: But to fully understand the implication of what Jesus was instituting, you should…(see our episode on the Eucharist).

Libby: And look out, here come the ushers with the collection of the faithful and the gifts of bread and wine, just a beautiful symbol of what the people bring to the celebration. This is the fruit of the work of their hands.

Kai: It is not always recognized just how much this is a participatory event, Libby, designed over 2000 years with great thought and prayer behind it.

Libby: And worth repeating, Kai, one only gets out as much as one puts in.

Kai: That could be argued, Libby, as you're actually getting the Eucharist no matter how lame your participation. And now the priest is saying the prayer over the offering.

Libby: Did you know those prayers came from Jewish table prayers?

Kai: Did not know that, Libby. Nice. The priest is a pro, moving at a good clip, and yes, I think.

Libby: The people are kneeling out of reverence, so it must be at ...

Kai and Libby: The Eucharistic Prayer.

Kai: The center and high point of the celebration.

Libby: And now, this is when the Lord becomes present in the bread and the wine.

Kai: The source and summit of the faith.

Libby: The second half of this prayer is on the unity of people. We thank God for bringing us together. We ask God to keep us together. We ask God to make us one with the saints.

Kai: Beautiful. Never fails.

David Guffey: At the Savior's command and…

Kai: Back on their feet for the Lord's Prayer, the faithful are not quite sure what to do with their hands at this point.

Libby: Now, this prayer is the one Jesus himself taught his disciples, and this at last is said with gusto as every living Christian knows these words.

Kai: And now we'll see the priest invite everyone to share a sign of peace.

Libby: I see most folks going for the old handshake. Some just giving the old head nod.

Kai: There's no wrong way to extend peace to a fellow believer.

Libby: Did you know this used to be the kiss of peace?

Kai: That sounds like a wrong way.

Libby: Peace be with you, Kai.

Kai: And the peace of Christ with you, Libby.

Oh, we're at the Lamb of God.

Libby: A prayer to acknowledge that Christ is the Lamb of God who has taken our sins and brings us peace.

Kai: And the congregation is ready to head to the altar to receive the consecrate of bread and wine which has become the body and blood of the Savior.

Libby: We've got about two thirds going up today, Kai, and I give this congregation points for knowing when not to approach the altar.

Kai: Indeed. The Eucharist is a solemn sacrament, Libby, and it would be a definite foul to the soul to receive this gift outside of the church's guidelines.

Libby: Looks like we've entered into the reflection period after communion, a favorite moment for most participants, a sweet, peaceful communion with God.

Kai: Yes, this assembly is definitely reaping the reward of their efforts in attending, in repenting, in praising, and in receiving.

Libby: Amen.

Kai: And there it is, the presider Father Guffey himself has taken a seat, which means the host has been returned to the tabernacle, which means it no longer requires the physical reference of the assembly to kneel or stand.

Libby: And now Father Guffey is on his feet to deliver the final blessing and the dismissal.

Kai: Nicely done. The ascending forth of the faithful have been confessed, praised, and basking in the glow of heaven, received Jesus Christ. They are now ready to step outside and be the light of the world.

Libby: Well, yet another 2000-year-old ritual wherein the covenant between man and God has been met and renewed.

Kai: Well done, St. Monica. You live to praise another week.

Libby: We're Catholic Central. I'm Libby.

Kai: And I'm Kai, and that's it for the Mass. Ite Missa Est.

Libby: Go in peace.