***Short History of the Ordinary of the Mass***

The Mass today differs greatly from the very simple ceremony followed by Christ and his Apostles.  Though celebrated in the context of the Jewish Passover Meal, the Christian Eucharist proper consisted in: Consecration of the Bread, Consecration of the Wine, Breaking of the Bread, Communion of the Bread, and Communion of the Wine.  While something similar to the Jewish Passover table blessing must have been used from the very beginning to enshrine the Consecration, it is probably that the Mass of the Catechumens was not joined to the Eucharistic Service proper until sometime after the year 44 AD.  Before Christians were expelled from the Temple and synagogues, they frequented the Sabbath Reading Service and then only retire to one of their own houses for the Eucharistic proper.

**Comments:** Let that sink in for a while.  The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Meal) were not joint together until 10 years after Jesus' Resurrection!  Not only that, but they were also celebrated on different days!  The Liturgy of the Meal was celebrated on Friday Evening after sundown, but later moved to Saturday evening after sundown, and the Liturgy of the Word was celebrated on Saturday morning but was quickly moved to Sunday morning when the Jews expelled Christians out of the Temple and Synagogues.

***Mass in the Home***

The celebration of the Mass in a home gave a family-like external appearance to the Eucharist.  However, even though at the very beginning the Eucharist was celebrated in conjunction with a meal properly speaking, this practice was dropped very soon and usually for reasons of abuse (St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians).

We have a clear outline of such a Mass celebrated in a private home in and around Rome in the first centuries, given by Justin Martyr: **Didactic Part** (Liturgy of the Word): Readings from Apostles and/or Prophets, Homily based on these readings, Common Prayer for the needs of the Church, Kiss of Peace; ***Sacrificial Part*** (Liturgy of the Meal): Presentation of Bread and Wine mixed with water, Prayers and Thanksgiving over the oblation, Breaking of the Bread, Communion under both species, Collection for the Poor.

With a few exceptions, during these early centuries Mass was celebrated on Sundays only.  Also, there is no evidence of repetition of Mass on the same day - one Mass only - the rest of the clergy either concelebrating or assisting at Mass.  Already during this period, the formula "Body of Christ", "Amen," was used during the distribution of Holy Communion (St. Ambrose, 397).

**Comments:** Again, this was the practice of the Jews, one celebration of the family Sabbath Meal in the home every Friday evening after sundown (Jewish beginning of the Sabbath was after sundown Friday!) .  The men went to the synagogue for morning prayers on the Sabbath (which would be Saturday morning).  Ironically, it was the deeper belief and understanding of the REAL presence of Christ in the Bread and Wine that the desire for the celebration outside of Sundays' community celebration, especially in the late monastic movement, that weekday Eucharist eventually became the norm.  This monastic movement began in the early 4th century.