

Heaven on Earth

The Mass-God's Gift of Love & Life

Ties to Ancient Ritual

- The temple sacrifices of ancient times were vast in number and were of unblemished animals and frequently of lambs. The Mass has elements of the Old Testament sacrificial practices. Their priests offered unblemished animals in atonement for the sins of all the assembly. This practice originated with Moses at the time of the Passover and required the eating of the cooked flesh of the sacrificed lamb. We of the New Covenant have similar rituals based on the sacrifice of Melchizedek king of Salem(Later called “Jeru-Salem”). His sacrifice was of bread and wine as was that of Jesus at Last Supper.

The Supreme Sacrifice

- In Holy Mass Christ is both priest and the unblemished victim. The Mass reminds us of the last supper but it is more since it actually brings together for us Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. He is referred to and really is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We know these events as the Pascal Mystery whereby Christ offers himself as priest and victim for our sins.

Once and for All

- The Mass is not a repetition of Christ's sacrifice but is one and the same mystery made present in time although it is an unbloody sacrifice. It is the actualization of the three days of Holy Thursday , Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It is the same as if we are there with Mary and his disciples as these things take place. We are present with the real Christ in the Mass as he directed his apostles to do so in remembrance of him. Christ shows by his sacrifice that there is no greater love than to lay down his life for our redemption. He is the Word made Flesh dwelling with us, the Lamb of God.

The Outward Sign

- The sacramental aspect of the Mass is the conferral of grace upon those who take part worthily, that is, by not being in the condition of mortal sin. The Mass is the offering by all the faithful gathered and requires participation by all present. It is not as if they are spectators. It is important to realize that although we offer Mass as a priestly people, we must have a duly ordained minister to offer it validly.

The Rite Order

- The Mass is the highest form of worship of God since it is instituted by Jesus himself. It is the most important liturgical practice of His church. The principle parts are the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. The introductory prayers are followed by the penitential rite wherein the congregation acknowledge their sins and seek forgiveness. The Gloria (the angels hymn at Christmas) is then sung on Sundays except during advent and lent and at daily Mass. Then comes the reading of scripture. The first may be from the Old Testament or the New. The psalm from the Old T. follows. There is a 2nd reading on Sundays and designated feasts. Next all stand for the reading of the gospel by the priest or deacon to show respect for its special importance making the sign of the cross on forehead, lips, and heart so as to internalize its message. The homily is given by the priest or deacon and concludes the liturgy of the word.

In Persona Christi

- The important liturgy of the Eucharist begins by having all stand and recite the creed. The creed is a Trinitarian prayer expressing belief of the basic tenants of faith in God and his church. (Eucharist means thanksgiving). After the creed and the prayers of petition of the faithful, the gifts are brought forward along with the collection and presented to the presiding priest. Prayers of preparation are offered by the priest. The prayer known as the “epiclesis” is given special attention by the ringing of the alter bells by the server as the priest extends his hands over the bread and wine. Here the Holy Spirit is called upon to sanctify the bread and wine that will be offered to the Father. The **miracle of transubstantiation** then occurs as the priest pronounces the words of consecration over the bread in the form of hosts and the wine. In this action the priest is In Persona Christi. That is, he is speaking as Christ did at the Last Supper. He functions at that moment in the person of Christ. Christ speaks his words through the priest effecting the miraculous change of the bread and wine into the very body and blood of Jesus the sacrificial lamb of God. (Only a properly ordained catholic priest may be In Persona Christi. And that is at the consecration at Mass and in giving absolution in confession.)

Food for the Soul

- The priest then offers the sacred elements (the true body and blood of Jesus) in reparation to God the Father on behalf of all present and for the whole world (the offertory). The holy sacrament is completed by consuming the body and blood of Christ (in the form of bread & wine) by the priest and by those who are without serious sin and in communion with the universal church. The communicants are now fortified by the hearing of the word proclaimed and by the partaking of the sacred meal. Christ our life is within us as our most personal Lord and Savior.
- There are then concluding prayers and a final blessing by the priest and all are dismissed to go forth to live and love in the world as Christ's disciples.

The Mass as Biblical

- Throughout the liturgy of the Mass there are many uses of the bible. It is said that over a three year period the readings and prayers of the Mass cover essentially the entire scriptures. This stands to reason since the bible comes to us through the Catholic Church. It was compiled and preserved by the Church as far back as the late fourth century. It truly is the inspired word of God and is thus sacred and its interpretation is entrusted to that church which Christ himself established and preserves.
- We all wish to be with those we love. It is the same with Our Lord the divine lover. He does indeed remain with us when we are in his grace, that is, without serious sin. Moreover He is really present physically in our churches in the Blessed Sacrament for us to come return love for Love.

Our Obligation to God

- The Church's precept requires us to assist at Mass on Sundays and holydays. We do so to fulfill God's commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day. This commandment is not optional because we are to be faithful to God and His church. It is a serious sin to deliberately and intentionally miss Mass on Sundays and other required times.
- Attending and participating in Holy Mass should be joyful and satisfying because we become intimate with Christ in a most special way. No other religious practice can rightly claim such a high degree of closeness to Him as we have in the celebration of the Eucharist. May ours be a continuing attitude of gratitude for this wondrous gift that Jesus gives of himself to us.

Fit for a King

- We meet the King of kings when we assist at Mass with the proper disposition. This liturgical celebration brings us together with the Most High Lord of lords as Eucharist. He, The Savior, deserves the highest honor that the assembly can muster by our demeanor as reflected in our words, actions and dress.
- It is fitting that we examine our conduct and our dress when we come before the Lord.
- There is no greater love than that of Jesus who allows us to share in His life at Holy Mass.