

JOURNEY TO OUR FATHER

FULFILLING HIS DIVINE WILL ON THE PATH TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Discerning and Living the Authentic Faith and Moral Teachings of the Catholic Church in Our Modern World

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS EXPLAINED

By James P. Wasel

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

If one looks up the word redeemer in a dictionary, it says that a redeemer is someone who "recovers by payment or other satisfaction; to make up for; to make amends for; to deliver from sin and its consequences by means of a sacrifice offered for the sinner." That last definition, especially, brings to mind what we have been told about Jesus Christ. You may ask, why did God have to send His only Son, Jesus Christ, God-made-Man, to be our redeemer; why couldn't we redeem ourselves? What exactly was it that we had lost and needed to restore through this ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

By their sin, our first parents, Adam and Eve, lost sanctifying grace for themselves and their descendants, and fell into the slavery of sin (Sanctifying graces come from God and gives life to our soul; it makes man holy and pleasing to God and helps protect our soul from mortal sin). Thus, by the sin of Adam and Eve the gates of Heaven had been closed. It was as impossible for them or their descendants by their own efforts to arise from their fall. Man of himself could neither atone for the offense he had committed against God nor regain sanctifying grace and the right to Heaven.

No one but God Himself can fully atone for an offense committed against the infinite majesty of God. But God could not make satisfaction *in His own nature*. Therefore, if God required complete satisfaction from men for the offense committed against Him, a Divine Person had to become man and in His human nature make that satisfaction. And this, God in His infinite goodness and mercy determined to do. He promised fallen man a Divine Redeemer, who was to render full satisfaction for our offenses and restore sanctifying grace to man and the right of inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who lived before His actual coming could not, it is true, enter Heaven, but with the grace which God gave them on account of the

Redeemer to come, they could merit the eternal kingdom and then enter into it with Him.

At that time fixed by God for the fulfillment of His promise to send a Redeemer arrived, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man through the power of the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Virgin Mary. The Son of God became man means that He took a human body and a human soul; that He could feel and suffer as we can, and that He was like us in all things except sin. (Excepts from Fr. John Laux, M.A., "Chief Truths of the Faith", Tan Books and Publishers, Rockford, IL, 1990)

FRUITS OF THE REDEMPTION

Our Savior chose to undergo the most cruel suffering and to die an ignominious death, the death of a slave and a malefactor, in order to demonstrate before the eyes of the whole world God's horror of sin, as well as God's love for sinners. The Cross of Christ is the eternal monument of Divine Justice and Divine Mercy. Under the Cross mankind learns the divine lesson that the way of the Cross is the only way to victory over sin and the only way that leads to the heights of Christian perfection. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9,23).

The Love of Jesus destroyed the power of sin which kept us out of heaven. God opened the gates of heaven to welcome His Son, and Jesus went home to heaven to prepare a place for us. By His death Christ redeemed us from sin, from the slavery of satan, and from eternal damnation. Christ's atoning sacrifice won for us the right to inherit heaven and all the graces necessary to secure our inheritance. (Excepts from Fr. John Laux, M.A., "Chief Truths of the Faith", Tan Books and Publishers, Rockford, IL, 1990)

SHARING IN HIS VICTORY

Christ will not take us up to Himself unless we freely give ourselves to Him. This death to the life of sin, this sharing of the divine life, is Baptism. The soul of a baptized person is cleansed from all sin and is sanctified by the grace of God. It makes us Christians, children of God, heirs of heaven and members of the Catholic Church, with a right to receive the other sacraments. It removes from us that mark which keeps us under the slavery of Satan. It frees us from slavery, and it communicates to us the very life of God through sanctifying grace. We live in God and He lives in us through this bond which unites us. It makes us heirs to the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Baptism is necessary for salvation because Jesus said: "Unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). (Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, "These are The Sacraments", Hawthorn Books, Inc., NY, NY, 1962, pp 15-34)

THE NATURE OF SACRIFICE

When God raised up Moses to lead His people from Egypt to the Promised Land, God made some changes. God specified exactly the kinds of sacrifices that were to be offered to Him from then on; and God established an official and hereditary priesthood. With the coming of Jesus Christ a new age began, the Christian Age in which you and I are living. All that had gone before was but a preparation for this final stage in God's plan for man's salvation.

Sacrifices of the Old Law, included *unbloody sacrifices*, such as the first fruits, also bread, oil, and wine. But the chief sacrifices were *bloody*: the offerer brought his goat, ox, or sheep, laid his hand on it to show that he gave it God, and its throat was cut; then the priest sprinkled the blood round the altar, and the victim was entirely burnt (holocaust) or partly burnt and partly eaten by the priests or by the offerer and his friends at a common meal (sacrificial banquet). The sacrifices of the Old Law, especially that of the paschal lamb and the yearly sacrifice of atonement, were typical of the great sacrifice that the Redeemer was to offer on Calvary.

The Sacrifice of the New Law took the place of the sacrifices of the Old Law; the *One Sacrifice* supplanted the *many*. This new and true sacrifice is the *Sacrifice of the Cross* and its continuation, the *Sacrifice of the Mass*. The Sacrifice of the Cross, the Sacrifice of the New Law and the Most Perfect Sacrifice, is the Son of God Himself, who, by His death on the Cross, offered Himself to His Heavenly Father in our stead and "obtained everlasting redemption" for us (Heb. 9,12). The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is called a sacrifice of redemption, because by it He ransomed us from the slavery of sin.

The sacrifices of the Old Law were types and figures of a perpetual sacrifice in the New Law. A perpetual sacrifice was not only prefigured in the Old Law; it was also expressly foretold by God: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation" (Mal. 1,11). The *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* is this perpetual renewal and continuance of the Sacrifice of the Cross. (Fr. John Laux, M.A., "Mass and the Sacraments, A Course in Religion Book II", TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL 1990)

THE LAST SUPPER, THE CROSS AND THE MASS

When the priest consecrates the Body and Blood of Christ, He offers up to God the Victim of the Passion, the "Sacrifice of our Ransom," as St. Augustine says. By pronouncing the words of consecration he is doing the same thing which was done by Christ before him. He is carrying out the command given to the Apostles and their successors by Christ Himself at the Last Supper: *Do this for a commemoration of Me*.

Christ at the Last Supper offered up to God His Passion and Death for the redemption of mankind. "This is My Body," He says, "which is delivered up for you; this is My Blood which is shed for you unto the remission of sins." This One Offering was completed and carried out on the Cross. The sacrifice which Christ offered at the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the Cross are not two sacrifices, but one and the same sacrifice. By the words: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" He gave His Apostles and their successors not only the *power*, but the *command* also, to do what He Himself had just done. He made them priests and thereby perpetuated the Sacrifice of our Redemption in His Church.

The sacrifice which Our Lord offered at the Last Supper cannot be separated from His Sacrifice on the Cross; neither can the Sacrifice of the Mass be separated from the Sacrifice of the Cross. Hence the sacrifice of the Last Supper, the Sacrifice of the Cross, and the Sacrifice of the Mass are not three sacrifices, but the selfsame Sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the "Eternal Victim", offering Himself through His Church by the priest and the faithful; to give honor and glory to God, and to apply the fruits of His Passion and Death to our souls according to our dispositions. (Fr. John Laux, M.A., "Mass and the Sacraments, A Course in Religion Book II", TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL 1990)

SACRIFICE OF THE PHYSICAL BODY VERSUS

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

The Mass is the Sacrifice of the Mystical Body of Christ, and is one with Calvary, which was the Sacrifice of the Physical Body of Christ. The Mass is by which the glorified Christ in Heaven pro-longs His sacrifice on the Cross by and through us. Though He is Priest and Victim the manner of offering is not the same in both the Mass and the Cross. On the Cross He was alone; in the Mass He is with us. On the Cross He offered up His Life for all who would one day be incorporated into His Mystical Body; in the Mass He renews the Sacrifice for all who are actually incorporated into that Mystical Body. The Mass is the same Cross made actual throughout space and time. There is no time or space between Calvary and now. On the Cross the human nature of Christ was susceptible of suffering; in the Mass His human nature is glorified and hence He cannot suffer except through other human natures which make up His Mystical Body. The Cross purchases Redemption; the Mass applies it. The Mass is the tremendous experience of the reality of Golgotha with its forgiveness and its love, its power and its pardon, extended and prolonged even unto this hour.

The Mass is the sacrifice of the Mystical Body, the Church, and not a mere empty symbolism of Calvary. Mystically divided by the separate consecration of the bread and wine, Our Lord thus renews the sacrifice of Calvary's Cross. But Our Lord is not alone. Just as the Offertory of the Mass is the *offering* of Christ and us, so the Consecration of the Mass is the *sacrifice* of Christ and us. The Vine sacrificed Himself on the Cross; the Vine and the Branches now sacrifice themselves in the Mass. The primary meaning of the words of Consecration then refers to the Vine: This is the Body and this is the Blood of Christ, renewing the sacrifice of Calvary. But the secondary meaning refers to the branches united to the Vine to form the Mystical Body. I offered myself with Thee at the Offertory; now I immolate myself with Thee at the Consecration. Take my body and my blood with Thee to the Cross; take my body and blood with all the pains, sorrows, agonies; with their capacities for love, for service, and for repentance; take them with Thee to the Cross, that they may be united with Thy sacrifice which alone makes them acceptable to Thy Heavenly Father. Take them, make them one with Thy sacrifice as the drop of water becomes one with the wine. Possess them so that the Heavenly Father in looking down upon Thy renewed Calvary may find that there is but one Body and one Blood which is that of His Beloved Son, in "Whom the Father is well pleased."

Our sufferings and our pains, our disappointments and our poverty, our mental anguish and our tears, of and by themselves would make us pessimists. But now they are

offered in the Mass. They have Christ's name stamped on them, and they become precious because they are part of His sacrifice. Only when they are "massed" in Calvary's sacrifice, do they become acceptable sacrifices; only when they are one with the Cross do they become redeeming as the Cross; only when they are crucified with Christ do they hold the pledge of His Resurrection. Hence the prayer of the Mass, said after the consecration:

"We humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, to command that these things - Christ's Body and Blood, as well as ourselves, our vows and prayers be borne by the hands of Thy Holy Angel to Thine Altar on High, in sight of Thy Divine Majesty, that so many of us as at this Altar shall partake of and receive the Most Holy Body and Blood of Thy Divine Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace, through Christ Our Lord. Amen." (Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, "The Fullness of Christ, The Sacrifice of the Mass", Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington IN, 1935)

THE SACRIFICIAL BANQUET PARTAKING IN THE EUCHARIST

Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever;... he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and... abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:51, 54, 56). ("Catechism of the Catholic Church" (CCC) 1406)

As we discussed in a previous paragraph, in the sacrifices of the Old Law, the offerer brought his goat, ox, or sheep, laid his hand on it to show that he gave it God, and its throat was cut; then the priest sprinkled the blood round the altar, and the victim was entirely burnt (holocaust) or partly burnt and partly eaten by the priests or by the offerer and his friends at a common meal (sacrificial banquet). This sacrificial banquet in the New Law is our receiving of the Eucharistic Jesus during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, that is, of the work of salvation accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, a work made present by the liturgical action." (CCC 1409)

"It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice." (CCC 1410) At the consecration of the Mass, the Crucified Christ becomes present on the altar Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the form of the bread and wine, and is offered up once again in an unbloody manner to the Father along with all our personal petitions and supplications, acts of reparation for our sins and those of others (living or dead),

and loving expressions of adoration and gratitude, praises and thanksgiving for our God.

In order to receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ worthily in Holy Communion, we must be free from all mortal or serious sin. "Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance." (CCC 1415)

When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion worthily, Jesus unites with us so closely that we live in Him and He lives in us, and we receive sanctifying grace which gives life to our soul, protects us from mortal sin and makes us more pleasing to God. Just as our body needs food in order to grow and keep healthy, so does our soul need the heavenly food of the Holy Eucharist. Each Holy Eucharist received worthily helps lessen our inclinations to do evil and helps us practice good works. "Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ." (CCC 1416)

The Holy Eucharist is our greatest treasure, for it unites us with God on earth and prepares us for heaven, where our union with Him will be continued forever. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist Jesus makes Himself one with us and becomes flesh of our very own flesh, blood of our very own blood, to communicate to us, earthly creatures that we are, the precious gift of His divine life. You must prepare well for the visit of Jesus in your heart by the frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints." (CCC 1419)

MITIGATION OF GOD'S JUSTICE

The Mass is a barrier that Jesus instituted to prevent sin from spreading its darkness and evil rapidly throughout the world. If this sacrificial and perpetual offering of Jesus for the offenses against God by sin would cease to exist, His sacrificial offering on Calvary would still be intact and redemptive, nothing can ever change that, but it would change from a perpetual offering to being a sacrifice of the past. Since God is a God of the present, He would be denied the present and perpetual offering that Jesus planned to offer and that God is most deserving of. Jesus knew that sin

would exist throughout time. He died for the remission of all of these sins even before they were ever thought of or committed. His unbloody offerings united through the Mass to His one time offering and death on the Cross is the redemption for all sins throughout all time.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is Jesus' perpetual atonement for sin that is due to God because of His goodness, mercy, grace, generosity, and divine providence towards all of his creatures; an offering of reparation for the offenses committed against His goodness, which is absolutely necessary for the mitigation of His justice which is due when sins are committed.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass praises God, asks pardon for sin, offers thanksgiving and gratitude to God most deserving of it. The Mass is also a petition and intercession for ourselves and for others both living and deceased. It's the most perfect prayer of the Church offered up to God on behalf of all of His children. There we truly enter into the mystery of God to become one with Him at Holy Communion. It's a small taste of heaven and of the eternity. (St. Leonard of Port Maurice, "The Hidden Treasure, Holy Mass", Tan Books and Publishers, Rockland, IL)

JOURNEY TO OUR FATHER FULFILLING HIS DIVINE WILL ON THE PATH TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Our lives here on earth can be described as a constant journey to the home of the Father. The love of our Heavenly Father is ever reaching out for His wayward children and the greatest sign of His love was shown 2000 years ago when He sent His son, Jesus, to show us the way back to the Father.

We show our love for Jesus by doing His will. We do His will by following and living by all the authentic faith and moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Drawing people back to the authentic truth about the Catholic faith helps us to be reconciled with our God, and obtain peace, holiness and happiness in this sinful world; and eternal salvation with our loving God in the next world.

"Journey to Our Father" is helping to bring people back to the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church, and to develop a closer more loving and holy relationship with their God. All material within our publications is quoted from solid Catholic sources which have an Imprimatur/Nihil Obstat. A copy of the Imprimatur/Nihil Obstat page from each source is available upon request.

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