

# Introduction

This is my very first attempt at creating an ebook. I am doing it for my dear friend, Father Joseph Adam Gondek, who lived to be 100 years old. He passed away on September, 13, 2011 quietly, I hope, in his sleep. I think it was his final three years, in which he resided in the county nursing home.

After his retirement from the Catholic priesthood, he lived by himself in what used to be the convent for the St. Agnes school located in Iron River, Michigan. After the pastor there had retired, the new replacement had other ideas for the use of the convent building. Fr. Joe had to find a new retirement home. He could have lived in the diocese' retirement home but, Fr. Joe had much more work to do and that facility would not have given him the freedom to do more work. Retirement was not in his vocabulary. His personal office was dedicated to doing Our Lord's work in any manner possible. And that was where he had always set his sights.

Shortly after being evicted from the old convent, his gracious niece purchased a home for Father Joe to live rent free. The extraordinary thing about this arrangement was that his niece was not even a Catholic. She was by all means a kindly and caring individual, determined not to let her dear uncle suffer the lack of a proper home. Bless her heart.

Fr. Joe wrote several books. His first one was entitled, "Land Lords of the World." It covers the history of money, the Federal Reserve System and how to fix the problem of corrupt money in our country and the world.

His second book covered the same topic, but had updates. His hope was to create a Trilogy on the "One World Takeover" by the

bankers of the world. Fr. Joe asked me to edit, not only his first book on the topic, but his second book as well and if I would write the forward to the book. I was honored to do so, but felt inadequate to do so.

Though the bankers were stumbled a few times, by the grace of God as pointed out in his two books and before he could start the third, things began progressing at light speed and the fear was it would be too late to be relevant.

He felt other callings during his retirement. That call was to research and write a book on the Catholic Mass. I found it most interesting and had always hoped to some day digitize it into an ebook or PDF file. The trick was in finding all the chapter files after editing for the first publication. I had lost them. To further complicate the task, I had lost my original printed copy. In his final days, I was fortunate to make a backup of his hard drive and leave the CD with him.

He had called me aside one day after a daily Mass he offered in the confines of his humble home and said, I wish to leave you all the rights to my books upon my passing and for you to do as you see fit. Again, I was humbled by the jester and wondered if and when I could really do anything with them to make a difference. I wasn't sure if he had put such in his last will and testament, but I left it in the hands of God.

Another niece (not the one who had purchased the home ) had a young man live in the upstairs room in exchange to care for Fr. Joe, prep his meals and have his medications set out to take each day. Fr. Joe's health was failing rapidly as he was approaching the centurion mark. I had always told him in kindness that God was not going to let him go until he reached 100. He would give that impish little smile and continue to eat his breakfast. I truly did

enjoy our visits and conversations. It became harder with each passing week to seem him fail and his hearing suffered greatly.

After he entered the nursing home, I was uncertain what would happen to his computer and files. The young man would use Fr. Joe's computer and change the desktop appearance. That became very confusing to him. Many times he would call me over or drop an email to help fix things up on the computer. I wasn't confident that his files would remain in tack.

Months after his passing, his niece, who is also a friend of my wife and me, called and said she had Fr. Joe's computer and floppy disks in her garage along with some books she found hidden way in the house, and wanted to know if I wanted them. I jumped at the opportunity and thought this will provide an opportunity to reproduce some of his works.

I opened the case of his computer and there laying on the bottom was a CD. I had forgotten that I use to put one CD backup inside the case for emergency and leave him on his table. If he had misplaced his original, I knew I had one in his computer case. It's been a number of years, somewhere in the neighborhood of five to seven since recovering the CD. A major move to Florida from Michigan was in the works. The property development and construction took the better part of time for my wife and me. In addition it took three years to sell our Michigan home, so there were many trips back and forth.

God works in mysterious ways it is said. I found myself involved in the parish RCIA program that came about in a convoluted manner. The second time of doing it, led me to think of his Mass book. I thought it would be a great addition to teachings and I truly did want to create an ebook out of it. I now have that purpose and determined to peck away at making it a reality.

As I mentioned above, Marquette, Fr. Joe's niece had given me a case of books that were forgotten about. In the case was the first book he wrote, "Land Lords of the World." I now give them away as gifts and promotional items at conservative meetings for those interesting in learning about the monetary system and the Federal Reserve Banking System which holds the America people hostage to the nation's debt.

His second book, "World Held Hostage, What Bankers Don't Want You to Know," I had fully and painfully tried to edit. Jokingly, I would tell Fr. Joe, that his first draft looked like a hostage note clip from magazine scripts. Because I was deep into it, I always had the rewrites and the final copy on my computer. Both books are available as free downloads in PDF format on my website, [www.Tcolnc.com](http://www.Tcolnc.com).

I hope you find this book helpful and interesting, "What's Going on here, at 200 Lennox Place."

May God bless and keep you safe. - Daniel J. Stafford

**WELCOME!**

**TO 200 LENNOX PLACE**

**Celebrating Remembrance Of a Past Event  
And Thanksgiving For a Present Reality**

by Fr. Joseph A. Gondek

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Other Books by Rev. Joseph A. Gondek  
**Land Lords of the World  
and  
A World Held Hostage By Debt**

Both are now out of print, but available for  
download @ [www.Tcolnc.com](http://www.Tcolnc.com) in PDF

## Invocation

Come, Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful,  
and kindle in them the fire of your love

O Queen of heaven, rejoice! Alleluia  
For He whom you merited to bear, Alleluia  
Has risen as He said, Alleluia  
Pray for us to God, Alleluia  
Rejoice, and be glad. O Virgin Mary, Alleluia  
For the Lord has risen indeed. Alleluia

### What's in This for The Reader?

“Curiosity must be kept alive” said Eleanore Roosevelt. Without curiosity we'll never learn anything, not even what our life is about. If you are curious enough to read this whole book, it could lead you to Heaven. What more could anybody ask for?

### And for the Author?

The Joy that comes to stay- From Giving one's Life Away- For Love of God and Neighbor. “Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.” Mt 10:39

## Foreword

Every morning at six o'clock the neighbors see the lights go on at my house. At about 6:30 they see several cars park in front and quite a few people coming into the house. They notice the people stay there about 3/4 of an hour and then leave.

One day a lady came to visit me and during the course of her visit asked, "Would you mind telling me what's going on here in your house every morning? What's so important that all these people come so early every morning for? What do they do there? I am a Protestant and curious."

I, the author, am 92 years of age with disabilities that prevent me from celebrating Mass at the Parish Church, so I do it at my house a block or so away. A house full of people find the early hour more adapted to their situations than the Mass at the Parish when available, so they come to this Mass.

This incident recalls for me a similar one recorded in the gospel according to St. John. At Bethany John the Baptizer was preaching and two of his disciples were with him. "As he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. When He turned around and saw them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, ". . . Teacher, where do you stay? 'Come and see'" He answered. So they went to see where he was lodged, and stayed with him that day . . . Jn 1.35ff

I also could have answered the lady who wanted to know what these people were doing in my house that early in the morning by telling her, "Come and see," but I didn't think she was ready for that kind of a response. So I asked her if she has some time for me to answer her. She said she had half an hour at the moment.

I believe there are millions of people like her who may be curious to know what goes on in Catholic church that attracts hundreds of Catholics and others there, Sunday after Sunday, even in small communities.

Scores of people also attend at their parish churches early in the morning on week days. They look upon what they are doing as taking part in the Mass as the Remembrance and Renewal of the redemptive Sacrifice of Jesus. This is the Mystery of faith which tests' people's faith in Jesus as the Son of God and our Savior and prepares them to Come and See and stay with him, not just for one afternoon, but for eternity.

In his Father's house there are "many rooms" he told us. In some translations they are called "dwellings." That doesn't matter. Being with someone, who loves us and whom we love, makes any dwelling a Mansion.

I am writing this book for all who are curious and want to know, for the faithful Catholics to help them deepen their faith and appreciation of this awesome Mystery, and for the 50% of Catholics who still fail to appreciate their birthright as Catholics. They do not understand it at all and neglect to Come and See, except at Christmas and Easter to be seen.

### **Why This Book?**

Aren't there already many good books on the Mass on the market, so why another book on the subject? What is so special about me and my book that I think that people will read it rather one of the others?

True, there are many good books out there and perhaps with greater content and erudition, but the average "man in the

street” finds it hard to read them beyond a first few pages because they are written by academics and are so pedantic, bookish and impersonal.

This is unfortunately true even of the Pope's Encyclicals and the Catholic Catechism. Important as these documents are, how many people read them? I had the experience of submitting one of these chapters to a friend of above average intelligence, for his critique. I was surprised when he checked one paragraph for a rewrite because it wasn't clear enough to be understood. It happened to be a direct quotation from the Catholic Catechism.

What is special about me and my book is that I try to make each chapter read like a letter from home. Instead of using a didactic style that speaks down to people, I use a narrative style that recognizes that ordinary people have a lot of innate intelligence, common sense, and at times real intuition and insights that see meanings that educated academics fail to perceive. They also have questions. By telling them stories I try to raise them to higher levels of understanding one chapter at a time.

I may not always succeed in following that pattern of writing, but in general, readers keep on telling me that they find my books easy to read and understand because the language is simple and to the point. So they keep on reading to the end, start thinking about what they read, and read it again, sometimes a third time.

My qualifications for writing to explain these awesome and mysterious truths that the Catholic Mass entails are these:

1. The excellent theology course I have received at the Pontifical College Josephinum.
2. I have celebrated the Mass every day For 66 years, except for the few days that I have been disabled. During

all that time the Mass has been my life and source of my strength and the object of my meditations.

3. An excellent Course in English composition greatly enhanced through 66 years of practical experience in writing, editing and personal communications, to reach the kind of expertise that I am credited with.

So if you deem these qualifications adequate, I invite you to read this book and to take the time to reflect on what you have read. May the Lord bless you and give you a deeper understanding, appreciation and love of one of his most precious gifts which you will learn is really the Lord's Gift of Himself given in a mysterious manner. There are many other mysteries here waiting for you, especially if you are curious and like to explore.

Thank you.

Fr. Joseph Adam Gondek

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# **Chapter One**

## **Our Legacy from the Chosen People**

There are two practices that clearly identify us as the true successors and heirs of Israel and of the promises given to them. They are:

1. the faith of Abraham
2. the Jewish art of remembering

They are legacies from the people of God in the Old Testament that identify us in the Catholic Church in our Celebration of the Mass as the Israel of the New Covenant.

### **The Faith of Abraham**

Abraham's faith takes God at his word without knowing or understanding how God will fulfill his promises or how he accomplishes his wonders. It is a faith that takes us out of our pagan and materialistic life style and cultures up the hill of sacrifice with our most precious possessions, like Abraham's son Isaac was. This is the faith that will enable us to accept the words of Jesus telling us "This is my Body" "This is my Blood," without any hesitation or doubt.

### **The Jewish Gift of Remembrance**

The Jewish gift of Remembrance helps us to understand how a past event can become present again. Every year Orthodox Jewish families came together to celebrate a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the most important event in their history, their Passover from the 400-year-old slavery in Egypt to the freedom of the Promised land. That Passover Sacrifice was to be an annual event as a perpetual Remembrance.

Modern Jewish families celebrate in obedience to the directions

given them in the book of Exodus, which read: "You and your children must obey these rules forever." That word forever implies that the celebration was to continue not only in its dimension as a promise but also in its fulfillment in Jesus. But modern Jews who no longer have the faith of Abraham that was meant to lead them to the Messiah, observe only that literal directive, not its new and completed meaning in the New Covenant with Jesus.

When your children ask you "What does this ritual mean?" you will say "It is the sacrifice of the Passover to honor the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. He killed the Egyptians but spared us. Notice that during the Passover celebration they were asked to say, "It is the sacrifice of Passover," not "It was." What they were celebrating was a present sacrifice.

Before my ordination as a priest, I have been with a Jewish family for such an observance. The Passover meal consisted essentially of the lamb, herbs, and wine. The family first sang psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Note the importance of these two reasons for offering the sacrifice. The father led the singing and the prayer. Then the youngest child asked the father "Why is this night different from every other night?" The father then gave the account of their Passover. Here again in the Jewish tradition it was a ritual celebration of something in the past, affecting their lives now. Yet the question was "Why is this night different?" They were celebrating a special night. But now in this modern celebration something is missing. The Jews no longer have the sacrifice of a lamb. They simply buy the lamb at a kosher butcher shop, and the father therefore can no longer answer. "It IS the sacrifice of the Passover to honor the Lord." Once the veil to their sanctuary where the sacrifices of the Old Testament were offered was split in two at the death of Jesus, they no longer have a valid Passover Sacrifice. Their sanctuary was no longer sacred but open to public and profane view. The imperfect sacrifices pointing to the Redeemer

were now replaced by His perfect sacrifice as the Lamb of God in fulfillment of the promises.

When Jesus celebrated the New Passover it was again a sacrifice. Offering Himself under the signs of bread and wine, which showed spiritual nourishment, He was providing for his followers, as Moses fed the Israelites in the desert with the quail and the manna to sustain their bodily life.

### **The Past and the Future**

The Jewish Passover Sacrifice was a ritual celebration of a past event. The Last Supper Passover celebration, however, by Jesus and the apostles, was a ritual sacrifice making present to his apostles, His future death on the Cross the next day. Only after the resurrection was it a ritual celebration of His past; Life, Death, and Resurrection. Jesus himself was the first Priest to celebrate this complete mystery ritually in the home of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The spirit of praise, thanksgiving, and fidelity with which the Jews celebrated their Passover will help us to appreciate and celebrate our Reality which was meant to touch human life in a far more profound way than their old Passover ever did. Every time the Holy Eucharist is offered, it helps us to understand it as truly a Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving Through the ministry of his priests. He would continue to bring mankind His Presence and Memory of that Reality to the end of time, thus fulfilling the words of prophet Malachi: "From the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations. And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering, says the Lord of hosts." (Mal 1: 11) In the words of the Second Vatican, It is the Eucharist that creates the Catholic Church. Without the Eucharist it would not be the Church Jesus built on Peter and his successors.

## **The Liturgy of the Mass has a History**

The Church continues to embellish and develop the ritual celebration of the Eucharist because here are the heart and center of our Christian life, spirituality and worship. Here we are brought into a personal relationship with our Redeemer. The Eucharist is Jesus reaching out to us with His Love as a human being. The Church seeks to use the human gifts, talents, and songs of whatever nation she finds herself in, to make the actions used to celebrate the Holy Eucharist more attractive. Human imagination is ever active and here serves to bring out the beauty and meaning of the events we celebrate.

Even now we in the United States we are waiting for some minor changes to be implemented to the ritual of the Mass to enhance the peoples' participation.

## Chapter Two

### Celebrating the Passover

Remembering is a basic human experience. For the Jews, the people of Israel, it was their very life and tradition. They were asked by God to preserve and celebrate for all time what they remembered that God had done for them. It is hard for us to understand why the Jews are so preoccupied with the Holocaust when millions of other people also lost their lives in the war. We need to know, that for the Jews remembering means a whole lot more than it does for the average non-Jewish person.

The annual celebration of the Passover was commanded to have the people remember the angel of death passing over the houses marked by the blood of the Lamb. This action led to their deliverance from Egypt.

This event was also a magnificent sign, or type, foreshadowing the Blood of the New Passover saving all mankind by the Blood of Jesus the Lamb of God marking the doorposts of our souls and bringing us to freedom from the slavery of sin.

For the Jews the tradition of remembering was so powerful that it made the past event present, to be experienced all over again. It touched their lives so deeply that they become very sensitive about their memories.

Knowing the Jewish concept of remembering will help us understand what Jesus meant after the Last Supper when He said, "Do this in remembrance of me". He was a Jew celebrating the Jewish Passover with His Apostles who were Jews. They were celebrating the memory of an event, thereby in their tradition making it present again for them. Jesus was going to make His event present through the Mass.

1. The event the Jews remembered was the *sacrifice* of a lamb through which they had gained a Passover to freedom from the slavery of Egypt.

2. Every time they celebrated the memory of that Passover sacrifice with its Passover meal they did it in praise and thanksgiving for that first redemption. That first Passover was experienced over again, so much so, that every annual Passover celebration thereafter was likewise a true sacrifice. Together with the sacrificial meal it gave them power to look forward to the future with hope that “He who is to come” would fulfill the promises of the Covenant. The Promised Messiah would bring them more complete liberation, make them a great nation, and eventually through them would bring total redemption to all mankind. This last promise was not always clear to them until the Age of the Prophets.

### **Passover Reinforces Mission**

3. The Jewish Passover was also a celebration of the Covenant by which God made them “a chosen people” with a Mission to bring to all nations the knowledge of the one true God. To be faithful to that Mission, they were to be a holy people and a priestly people.

Every time they offered the Passover Sacrifice it gave them an opportunity for a personal renewal of that Covenant and Mission in their lives as individuals.

4. As they moved on past the Babylonian captivity and into the Age of the Prophets the celebration recalled, for them, more clearly the Promises of the Messiah and Redeemer, the new Moses, who would lead them to a new Promised

Land and establish a New Kingdom of God in which there would be no more pain, tears, or sorrow, a kingdom of justice and peace, and a New Covenant.

## **The New Passover**

On the day before Jesus died on the Cross, He celebrated the Passover with His Apostles. But it was no longer just a Passover celebrating the remembrance of God freeing the Jews from their slavery to Egypt, nor a sacrifice of a lamb eaten in a sacrificial meal. That ancient observance provided the context for a New Passover, a New Sacrifice, a New Sacrificial Meal, and a New Covenant with New Promises.

## **Love the Highest Value**

The gospel according to John for Holy Thursday opens with these words, “*Before the Passover*, Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father.” Jn 13:1

What was He going to do to show what had been the guiding motive all his life? What had he considered most important, now that he was about to die?

The gospel continues; “He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end.” Jn 13:1. So for him, love was the most important value. How had he expressed that love throughout his life? In the same way that he was going to express it now at this Supper, through a humble service, washing the feet of his disciples, a service people considered below their dignity, to be performed only by servants. But Jesus, though aware of his dignity as their Lord and teacher, did not consider such service of one's neighbor to be beneath his dignity but as an expression of love and concern for the neighbor's needs.

What Jesus had done on this occasion showed not only what his whole life had been all about but reminded the apostles why he had performed all those healing's and miracles for the crowds throughout his public life. That would leave a powerful example motivating all who believe and put their trust in him to have the same kind of love for all mankind, if they wanted to be his true followers. "What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done so you must do." Jn.13.15

## **No Greater Love**

After that example of love on that Holy Thursday Jesus knew He would die on the Cross the next day. So He offered Himself and his death as the Lamb of Sacrifice at this his Last Passover, as his Supreme Act of Love for mankind in atonement for sin. He said: "Greater love no one can have than to give one's life for another." This made the whole celebration of the New Passover a true Sacrifice that would continue to be repeated whenever the new Passover would be celebrated. His death on the Cross was the same Sacrifice confirmed and reaffirmed through the slaughter of the "Lamb already offered."

## **The Jewish Disciples' Problem With Faith**

All through Chapter Six of the Gospel according to John we see Jesus preparing the people, with love and compassion, to accept him as the Son of God and promised Redeemer. As the Son of God he promised he would bring life eternal to all who have faith in Him.

He worked four miracles, involving four different laws of nature to help people in four different stressful situations. He fed about 15,000 people with the five barley loaves, calmed a violent storm, walked on water to quiet fears, and brought the boat to shore for

the exhausted apostles without further rowing. All of this should have disposed people of good will to see him as the Supreme Lawgiver and compassionate Son of God who could suspend the laws of nature and be for them the Bread that would sustain their spiritual life. He tried in many ways to elicit their faith in Him. But they were only concerned about food that feeds their bodily lives and refused to accept Him as the Living Bread.

They did not have the faith because faith is a gift from the Heavenly Father in whom they were not interested, nor in doing His will. Jesus told them so. "No one comes to me unless the Father draws him. I will raise him on the last day." (Jn 6:44) In other words, the Father does not give the grace to believe in Jesus to anyone who refuses to accept the fact that it is the Father's will that his Son whom He sent us is to be our Redeemer from our slavery to sin. Not having an interest in a relationship with, God the Father, they were not open to receiving His Son as God's greatest gift to mankind. So the heavenly Father who respects the free will he gave them would not impose his gift of faith that would draw them to Jesus.

When Jesus told them that he is the living bread which they must eat to live forever, and then promised to give them bread, another bread that would be his "flesh for the life of the world" they quarreled among themselves and asked "How can he give us His flesh to eat?"

(Jn 6:13)

If they had the faith in Jesus that he asked of them, they would not need to ask how. They would know that he as the Son of God who has power over the laws of nature would also have the power to give them his flesh in a form in which they could eat it without violating their aversion to eating human flesh. So they failed to pass the test of faith and remarked. "This sort of talk is hard to endure. How can anyone take it seriously?" (Jn 6:60) "From this time on,

many of His disciples broke away and would not remain in His company any longer.” (Jn 6:66) These must be the saddest words in the Bible.

## Chapter Three

### A Challenge to Peoples' Faith

#### Jesus Offers the First Mass

Before His Sacrifice on the Cross on Good Friday Jesus did a most mysterious thing after the Last Supper that continues to puzzle and confound people of little or no faith to this day.

When the hour had arrived, Jesus took his place at table, and the apostles with him, He said to them, "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I *suffer* . . . Then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying": "This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me." He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as he did so: " This is the New Covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." (Luke 22:14)

St. Matthew adds some significant details to what we have just quoted from St Luke's gospel. Matthew quotes Jesus saying, "Take this and eat it, This is my body." Then of the cup Jesus said, "All of you must drink from it, for this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. . . ."

Note that Luke in his account points to the future, saying of the bread changed to the body of Jesus "to be given for you" and of the blood "which *will* be shed." Matthew speaks of Jesus offering His Body to the apostles to be eaten in the present and tells them they must drink of His Blood in the present. Both versions are correct. The first version refers to the present Passover sacrifice. The second reference is to its renewal in a bloody manner on the Cross the next day.

Jesus had promised: “The bread that I *will* give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” Here we see the promise fulfilled when he changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood and offered Himself as the Sacrifice of the New Covenant under the appearances of changed bread and wine to be the living bread to be eaten as the sacrificial meal by those who have taken part in the sacrifice.

### **Apostles Ordains His First Priests**

When Jesus said: “Do this in remembrance of me” he commanded the apostles to do what he just did “With that command he gave them the power to do it. Repeating his whole action of changing bread and wine into his body and blood and offering him as the Sacrifice of the New Covenant was not possible for them without being given that power. By empowering them to offer the Sacrifice Jesus ordained them his priests.

Jesus celebrated the Passover as a Jew with Jewish apostles in the sense in which the Jews understood a Passover remembrance. This meant that the very celebration of this Passover would bring into the present what Jesus and his apostles did at the Last Supper. This they were to do, whenever they and their successors, whom they ordained priests, offered the sacrifice of the Mass.

But in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit is the active and empowering agent. Just as the Holy Spirit brought Jesus into our world by “overshadowing” Mary, his Virgin Mother, so the power of the Holy Spirit brings Him to us as the principal celebrant whenever the Mass is celebrated by duly ordained priests. Duly ordained means ordained by the apostles or their successors.

By the institution of Jesus Himself the empowerment by the Holy Spirit takes place only when passed on to them by the apostles and their successors to whom they in turn have passed it on. It was the

power to bring Himself into the world in this new dimension of bread and wine. So Jesus wanted to assure his followers that this power was used properly. This is how the early church understood the ordination from the beginning.

The empowerment the Jewish priests received from their ancient traditions typified and foreshadowed the mysteries of the New Covenant. But it had to give way to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world to continue the work of redemption by the Messiah, Jesus.

### **The Mass After the Resurrection**

After the Resurrection, the Mass would celebrate not only the life and death of Jesus but also His Resurrection, Ascension, and his Living Presence in the world today. This was the future the Jewish Passover looked forward to, even though vaguely. The New Passover leads us to look forward again, bringing us the Risen Lord in the Holy Eucharist as the pledge of a far greater future glory.

“We are children of God now, what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him, keeps himself pure as he is pure” (1 Jn 3: 2-3) “He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (Jn 6: 54)

Jesus himself celebrated the first Mass after His Resurrection. He did it at the home of the two disciples he met on the road to Emmaus. Here he was present in Person as the principal Celebrant as he is at every Mass that is offered as the New Passover Sacrifice. But in the Mass his risen presence is not visible as it was for Mary Magdalen and the disciples before his Ascension.

Now, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of duly ordained priests, this Mass is offered to the end of time. Every time we take part in the celebration we share in the fruits of the Sacrifice and continue the work of our salvation.

Celebrating the new Passover, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was offering himself as a Sacrifice under the appearances of bread and wine to be consumed as a sacrificial meal. This was typified by the Jewish practice of offering the lamb as a sacrifice in their celebration of the Passover and then partaking of it in a sacrificial meal.

The following day, Friday, Jesus offered the same Sacrifice of himself again, but this time in a cruel and bloody death on the Cross. It was the same body and blood of himself as the Lamb of God that he first offered in an un-bloody manner after the Last Supper. There he had just changed the bread and wine leaving their appearances unchanged.

This was what today we call the Sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice that he asked to be repeated “in remembrance of me.” On the Cross he died but once. Now he dies no more. That sacrifice was not to be repeated, but he wanted it remembered and repeated forever through sacrifice of the new Passover, the Mass. The separate changing of the bread and wine into his body would be a perpetual remembrance of his dying on the Cross where his precious blood separated from his body.

Thus, are the words of the prophet Malachi being fulfilled; “from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name and a pure offering. For great is my name among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 1:11)

## **The Modern Crisis of Faith**

## **It Is a Mystery But Not Controversial**

When Jesus spoke to his Jewish disciples about himself being the Living Bread and eating His flesh and blood in order to have life eternal, He was understood literally by the Jews. That is why they quarreled among themselves. If they were to take all that symbolically there would have been no reason for them to quarrel about it. There are many denominations that call themselves Christian and often they do a great job of proclaiming some of the gospel, introducing people to the person of Jesus, even in the face of persecution and martyrdom. But when it comes to the great Mystery of Faith, the Holy Eucharist, they fail to pass the test of faith just like the Jewish disciples in Chapter 6 of John's Gospel did.

Sincere as they are, they are missing the heavenly Father's greatest Gift that would sustain them on their journey to the eternal Promised Land. All Christians need the spiritual nourishment that comes from partaking of the sacrificial meal that is the Body and Blood of Christ under the visible signs of nourishment.

## **The Proper Way to “Search the Scriptures”**

There is no need for individual members of any church to struggle trying to interpret this or any other scripture by themselves. First, you must understand this: there is no prophecy contained in scripture which is a “personal interpretation.” This is Scripture itself guiding its readers to a proper approach to the teachings the scriptures provide. (2 Peter: 20) The word “prophecy” used in this translation has the original meaning of the word ‘teaching(s).’ It was because most of the teachings in the Old testament were concerned with the future, the word acquired a derived meaning referring to the future. This is not that context for its use.

All we need to do to understand the true teaching of Jesus about

this Mystery of Faith is to ask ourselves *“How did the apostles understand these teachings.” “How did the early Christians taught by the apostles and their successors understand them and carry them out?”*

There are many sources in every century from which we can come to a correct understanding of the truths taught by Jesus. Reading what these historical witnesses have to say, we would soon learn that there is no difference between what the infant Church taught right after the Holy Spirit overshadowed her at The Pentecost and what she believed and taught in every century throughout her 2,000 years plus history.

All we need to do is to invoke the Holy Spirit, open our minds and hear His voice speaking to us through history. We'll do a bit of that in the next Chapter, Four.

## Chapter Four

### A Glance at the Historical Witnesses to the Mass The Apostolic Age

The fidelity of the Catholic Church to teaching and carrying out “everything” taught and commanded by Jesus has been attested to and defended in every century from the very first to the present. To present all this evidence from history even briefly is beyond the scope of this book.

The concluding words of John's gospel tell us “There are still many other things that Jesus did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them.” (Jn 21:25) A hyperbole, of course! But it sends us the right message.

So we must not think that the Bible, the inspired word of God that it is, goes into details of all that Jesus taught and did. He left that up to the Apostles. He recruited them to be the official witnesses of his oral teachings and explanations. They were his constant companions for three years hearing his teachings many times in different ways and were then entrusted by Jesus with teaching his entire message. (Mt 28:20)

They passed these teachings on by word of mouth for many years before any of them were written down in a very concise form in a gospel or letter that would later become part of the Bible. The people's eternal salvation did not depend on their ability to read a Bible that did not exist. Neither paper nor the printing press had been invented for about another 1,000 years. In the meantime about eight million people taught by word of mouth died for Christ and their faith in him during the persecutions of the first three centuries alone, before they had a Bible to teach them. It was not

until the year 397 when the Bishops decided at the Third Council of Carthage which writings were to be accepted as the inspired Word of God. At that Council all the books of both the Old and New Testaments that were accepted as inspired were enumerated, except for the Book of Revelation. The Bishops added that book to the Canon, or List, of the books making up the Bible in the year 419.

From that year on the Canon of the Scriptures remained as we have it today, except for the versions from which some books were deleted during the Reformation because they did not support the new teachings of the reformers. Most of the Protestant Churches today stay with that original Canon using translations which differ somewhat but in general appear to be true to the original texts.

The Bishops at the Council of Carthage were all legitimately ordained successors of the apostles and had the authority to make the decisions they made. Yet they submitted their decisions to the Bishop of Rome as the successor in office of St. Peter for his final approval before presenting the Canon to their communities as authoritative. Thus, this also makes them witnesses to the authentic tradition that the Bishop of Rome is the visible Head of the Church, sharing Peter's authority as the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The earliest witness to how the first Christians understood the words of Jesus concerning His Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine was given by St. Paul, 20 years after Jesus died, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven in his visible human body. Paul had formed a Christian community in Corinth, teaching the Corinthians by word of mouth. His letters reminding them of his prior teachings, solving problems, and correcting misunderstandings became some of the first documents that made up the Bible. What we now have as Gospels continued to be proclaimed by word of mouth for another 20 years before these summaries of Jesus's teaching were written up to become our New

Testament Gospels. The Gospel according to John and the Book of Revelation were written around still another 20 years later.

## **St. Paul's Witness**

In Chapter 10:16 of his first letter to the Corinthians St. Paul writes: “Is not the cup of blessing that we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” Then after extensive references to the practices of the Jews and of pagans, he closes the chapter with these words vs. 33 “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

Then in Chapter 11 vs. 17 ff. “What I now have to say is not said in praise, because your meetings are not profitable but harmful. First of all, I hear that when you gather for a meeting there are divisions among you . . . There may even have to be factions for the tried and true to stand out clearly. When you assemble it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for everyone is in haste to eat his own supper. One person goes hungry. While another gets drunk. Do you not have homes where you can eat and drink? Would you show contempt for the church of God, and embarrass those who have nothing? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly, but not in this matter.”

To translate this into our vernacular, this was the situation Paul was addressing. Before celebrating the Mass, the Christian communities were putting on a Pot-Luck “Lord's Supper” as a sign of unity and brotherly love for one another as a preparation for celebrating the Love Christ has shown through his Sacrifice on the Cross which the Mass brings into the present “in Remembrance” of that awesome event. This “Lord's Supper” was similar in purpose to Jesus' washing the feet of the apostles before celebrating the New Passover.

What Paul describes, the Corinthians were doing was not the way

to prepare for celebrating Mass and was providing the occasion for bickering and discrimination instead of love. Soon afterward the whole practice of this "Lord's supper" was discontinued all together and fasting for our sinfulness was seen as a better preparation for Mass.

Paul continues "I received from the Lord what I handed onto you, namely, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. Every time then you eat the bread AND drink this cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes! This means that whoever eats the bread OR drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body AND blood of the Lord . . . He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgement on himself." (1 Cor. 11:23-29)

To elucidate a bit: Paul, writing 23 years after Jesus ascended into heaven reflects the universal practice of the Catholic Church to this day. The Church recognizes, as Paul did, that the changing and consuming of both the changed bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus is necessary to celebrate the Remembrance of his death. The separate consecration and receiving symbolize the death when the blood of Jesus separated from his body on the Cross.

Present after the Consecration in the Mass is the Risen Person of Jesus to be received in the sacrificial meal (Holy Communion) chapter

13. Since in a living Person the body and blood are not separated, Jesus is received under either the appearance of bread OR wine. Paul is ingenious in how carefully he makes that distinction by use

of the words “and /and/or” This testimony shows how during this period of 20 years the early Christians understood and were putting into practice what Jesus had taught them about the Mass, through the Apostles and their successors.

Note also that the Scriptures were not divided into chapter and verse in their entirety until published 1698 by the prefect of the Vatican Library.

## **The Church Fathers Witnesses After the Apostolic Age**

From the beginning of the second century to the year 600 we have abundant witnesses to all the teachings of the Catholic Church in the writings of the Church Fathers. Good translations from the original Greek texts are easily available from the book store chains like Amazon, or even possibly found on the Internet.

Between the Age of the Apostles and that of the Church Fathers we have an especially outstanding witness to the Holy Eucharist (Mass) in the heroic martyr St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Ignatius was a disciple of the Apostle John. He was ordained priest and Bishop by St. Peter himself and then appointed by Peter to be his successor as the third Bishop of Antioch when Peter transferred to Rome.

St. Ignatius wrote seven masterful Epistles to his flock in different communities. In his letter to the Samaritans we have the first written record of the use of the word “Catholic” to identify Christ's Church as “the Catholic Church that is in Rome.” He does not anything more about that. He takes it for granted that the word was already in general use as applied to the Church and the Samaritans knew what he was writing about.

In this letter written before the year 107, the year of his death, Ignatius gives a good description of the celebration of the Mass and states very clearly that “there is no valid Eucharist without the Bishop.” No one can validly perform the actions necessary to bring the Person of Jesus into the present unless he has been given the power through ordination by a bishop who is a legitimate successor of an Apostle. Ignatius explains that this institution is the will of the Father and the way that Jesus entrusted the Eucharist to his Church to built up to be his Mystical Body made up of his disciples.

This witness of Ignatius of Antioch was given in much greater detail in his letter. I am unable to quote more from it because I let my complete set of the Church Fathers go to a book seller who was after me for it for several years. He finally persuaded me that it would do more good in his other people’s hands and I wouldn’t need it as I was getting up in years. I never dreamed I would be writing this book at age 92.

It makes Ignatius of Antioch sort of a Bridge between the Apostolic Age and the Age of the Church Fathers. The witness of the Fathers is unbroken, that the prayer of thanksgiving by a validly ordained priest brings about “a marvelous change of elements” which makes actual the saving reality of Jesus. His sacrificial death is made effective in the lives of believers by their participation in this....action.” Catholic Layman’s Library, Vol. 3, p 68.

## **Witnesses After the Patristic Age**

It is beyond the scope of this book to present a complete survey of the period after the year 600 just as we confined ourselves to leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> century with only Ignatius. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century had at least two other powerful witnesses giving much more detail about the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in the persons of St. Justin d.65 and St. Irenaeus d.200.

The period from year 600 to 1300 was a period of great turmoil and turbulence in the world marked by the migration of nations. It was at the same time a period of immense growth for the Church. She was the great educator and civilizer of the new peoples through the monastic orders that were founded during this period. It produced the great works of art, the cathedrals, the classical musical composers, philosophers, theologians and Saints, built universities, and evangelized the new nations. The 13<sup>th</sup> century was called by historians the greatest century in the history of the Church. The middle ages, often spoken of in the secular “uncivilized” world as the “dark ages” were actually ages when people lived holy lives enlightened by the light of faith that the seculars know nothing about. Our “modern” secular world prefers to live in spiritual darkness.

### **What if We Neglect the Sunday Mass?**

If we fail to attend Mass we will find it difficult to fully learn and appreciate God’s overwhelming Love for us which far surpasses the greatest human love. Without that knowledge we will soon fail to live our daily lives by the new Covenant of love. That Covenant requires us to love God above else and to love others as He loves them. Without the Mass we would likewise easily forget that we are created for a future of a raised eternal life for which the Mass prepares us.

# Chapter Five

## The Mass Is A Sacrifice The Catechesis

Most of our catechetical textbooks and classes for the past 40 years have been very deficient in presenting the Mass as a living and present sacrifice. The emphasis was on the Mass as a holy meal. They barely touched, if at all, on the essential character of the Mass as a sacrifice. No wonder so many young people today do not understand the Mass at all and think nothing of missing Sunday Mass.

The New Catholic Catechism put it all together and presents the same teaching that you read here, in a forceful and thorough manner, and was issued to help remedy the inadequacies in catechetical instruction. Unfortunately, the English translation of the Catechism uses language that the average reader does not always understand.

Paragraph 1363 of the Catholic Catechism summarizes everything you have read so far: “In the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt; every time the Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.”

How were the people to conform their lives to the event of the Passover made present? First, they were to become aware that they are now a free people, and that it was God who saved them from slavery and is the Author of their freedom. For this they were to

express their gratitude to Him by public worship through the offering of sacrifices and keeping the commandments.

Paragraph 1364 places the New Testament Passover into the same context. It says, "In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. "The new meanings that the celebration of the Eucharist is a celebration of the New Passover which makes present (and continues to offer) the sacrifice which Christ offered Himself once for all at the Last Supper and on the Cross, remains forever present before the Father, pleading in our behalf, and yet is also present for the faithful attending the Mass. Every time then that we participate in offering this Sacrifice, its fruits are applied and "the work of our redemption is being carried out."

## **The Altar**

The altar has a primary place in relation to sacrifice. Take special note of the word. We'll come back to that later. The mind and directive of the Church is that the altar on which the holy sacrifice of the Mass is to be offered must be the center of the people's attention. That is why the Church does not want anything in front of the altar or anything else in the sanctuary that would distract the people's attention from the central and primary place that belongs to the altar and to the sacrifice to be offered on it. A vase of flowers no higher than the altar sounds ok, but a bright array of pumpkins and corns talks, hardly.

Often around the country, parishioners are critical when their pastor tries to place the Blessed Sacrament in a small chapel or at a side tabernacle, because the mind of the Church has never been explained to them. The Church expressed its directives on that subject 40 years ago. They are found in the Missal every priest uses for saying Mass, in these words: "Every encouragement should be given to the practice of Eucharistic reservation in a chapel suited to

the faithful's private adoration and prayer. If this is impossible to construct a special Blessed Sacrament chapel because of the structure of the church, the Blessed Sacrament should remain reserved at an altar as before, or in a part of the church that is worthy and properly adorned, keeping in mind the purpose of making private devotion to the Blessed Sacrament more convenient for the people.”

In a response to some pastors who said that the Vatican Council II made it obligatory to place the Blessed Sacrament at a side altar, the Sacred Congregation replied, “No, there never was such an obligation. It may be done, if it serves the purpose explained above.”

The reasons for the different directions concerning the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament are based on the teaching of the Church that these are two different and distinct mysteries of our faith. They call for different responses and different devotion from the people.

## **The Mass**

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is an action. It is the action of Jesus making His Sacrifice of Himself for our redemption present in our community. He is the principal Celebrant of the Mass through the ministry of His Church and her duly ordained priests. We take part in this action of Jesus by taking an active part in the Liturgy, doing whatever the Church does to give honor and glory to God.

The Liturgy consists of prayers, singing, proclaiming God's Word in the Scriptures, the homily and many symbolic actions reenacting what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

Doing this on Sundays is the weekly worship we owe to God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. This is why the Mass occupies

the primary place in our relationship with God. It is the action of Jesus Himself giving us an opportunity to establish the same kind of relationship of love and gratitude with the Father that He had, in union with Him and through Him.

At this point we need to remember that there is no combination of words that will infuse into our minds a complete understanding of the Mass. We need to take these matters one chapter at a time and meditate on each one before going to the next. After we are through reading the whole book, the Mass will still be a profound mystery, because it is the action of God himself who cannot be fully understood by human intelligence. But hopefully, it will be sufficiently understood to be better appreciated and accepted with the faith of Abraham as a very special gift of God to mankind.

## **Holy Communion**

Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion is one of the actions integral to our taking part in the action of the Mass, but even after the Mass is over He remains with us in the tabernacle reserved for Him. Here we call him the Blessed Sacrament because even though he is the living risen Lord, he is bodily present in a different manner than we are when we say “we are here or there.”

He is present under the appearance or sign of bread. We know this because he told us he would be our *Living Bread*, and we believe him.

A sacrament is a sign. It always shows something. But a sacrament is always more than just a sign. It always is and delivers the reality that it shows. The signs we create are just signs. They are not the realities that the signs show. The Sacraments can be instituted only by God. Jesus being God is able to make signs be what they show. This is another of the many mysteries that you encounter in this book.

## **The Blessed Sacrament**

Making this distinction between The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament is a good way to help us understand that in the Mass we meet the same Risen Lord in two different modes of being. One is His action of offering Himself in sacrifice. The other is His living Presence remaining with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

Each mode of being calls for a different response from us. In the Blessed Sacrament He is present sacramentally, that is, under the appearances of bread and wine, to be available for Communion of the sick and as our best Friend whom we can come to visit with our personal concerns and devotion.

By the time we reflect on all the fruits of the Mass and Holy Communion and the love that God has for us, hopefully we will be different people than those who expect everybody and everything to be centered around them and what they want. We will never have to ask, “Well, what do I get out of the Mass? What’s in it for me?”

The Mass is an act of worship of our Creator who has already given us life, the promise of eternal life and so much more that we will never be able to thank Him enough for.

So our question now should be, “What can I give to the Lord for all He has given me?” It is in the Mass that Jesus is our Eucharist, our Thanksgiving. By offering himself to his heavenly Father in a supreme act of thanksgiving for sharing in the Father’s glory and being entrusted with the Redemption of all mankind, He provides us with the way to offer perfect thanks. By participating in the Mass we are united with His Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and make this perfect thanksgiving our own. By this union with the Son of God, our thanksgiving shares in divine value before the throne of the

Father.

# **Chapter Six**

## **Coming to Mass**

We saw that the Mass is the New Passover sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered for our redemption from sin. It is a sacrifice made present by a memorial celebration and by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Catechism has much more to say about that.

Here we will reflect on some of the actions of the Mass with which we are familiar. We will return to the Catechism when particular actions of the Mass call for it.

### **Our Preparation For The Mass**

Our Seminary professor emphasized for us over and over again long before the Vatican II Council that the best preparation for Sunday Mass starts the Monday before. It is the life we lead every day of the week. Filling our everyday life with acts of love as we look forward with anticipation to sharing the Lord's love for us. That and taking part in the sacrifice of the Mass and receiving him in Holy Communion daily, if possible, add up to the best preparation for the following Sunday's Mass.

### **Some Examples to Inspire Us**

Many distinguished converts who have struggled long on their journey of faith to full communion in the Catholic Church where they could receive His risen Body and Blood in Holy Communion often put "born Catholics" to shame. Their love, excitement, and eagerness to "meet Jesus" is the same that enabled the Apostle John to recognize him on the seashore cooking breakfast for the apostles on a charcoal

fire.

Peter's love for Jesus prompted him to jump into the water so he could get to him before the boat could take him there. Asking Peter three times "Do you love me," Jesus gave him a chance to confirm his love for him. Thus, he would bear witness to the other apostles the kind of love that Jesus wants all his pastors to have. It would be a love for their Good Shepherd who laid down his life for them as well as for his sheep. Loving the Chief Shepherd of the flock rather than the sheep for their wool and lamb chops, Peter qualified to be chosen chief shepherd to care for the flock after Jesus went back to the Father and was no longer physically present.

### **The Lord's Shepherds Do Care for His Flock**

After Peter's triple profession of love the Lord Jesus entrusted him with three categories of sheep that constitute his flock. They were the lambs, mature adult sheep, the yearlings. The original Greek text uses the same word for sheep the last two times. We can make our own selection as how to divide the flock into three groupings. Where some versions get word "yearlings," I don't know.

In the model of the Church before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council as a Pyramid we can divide the Pyramid into three parts quite easily. The Pope as the chief shepherd was the top of the Pyramid. The bishops and rest of the clergy make up the top below the chief shepherd, with the lay people making up more than 3/4 of the bottom part.

Now almost two thousand years after the first Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the Church to form it into the new Mystical Body of Christ on earth, the Spirit came again through an aging chief shepherd Pope John XXIII. In substance he said: "Look here, boys. This pyramid thing is way out of balance. The sheepfold is approximately one billion in number, besides another billion sheep

who are outside the fold and the Lord is adding to that number every day. We shepherds are only around 400,000. That's .004 of 1%. That's just like a single human hair holding up the whole pyramid. Let's call a Council and let the Holy Spirit come in to help us. We know the rest of the story.

The Second Vatican Council convened. The Holy Spirit came like a whirlwind, whirling the leaves and garbage covers around, and the people were confused, just like after the first Pentecost. Even now, 50 years after the Council, there are many people who are still confused and saying that the shepherds at the Council had too much wine. But at the Council the Church learned that while being like a pyramid served it reasonably well for almost 2,000 years, it can no longer do so. The Church has ceased to be a mustard seed and has grown into large bush like Jesus said it would.

At the Council the Church rediscovered what St. Paul had been teaching in all 14 of his letters, namely that the Church is a Family and we are all members of that Family. We are like a body with many members. Every member has a necessary function to fulfill for the good of the whole body. All the members have different gifts with the duty to use them to build up the kingdom of God.

We are born into that family by water and the Holy Spirit and become truly children of God, sharing his life. In that regard all the members are equal. The Pope and bishops possess authority as a gift to be used as a service to unity and good order in the Church, just like parents in any well-ordered family. After the Vatican documents were published, pastors were directed by their bishops to catechize the people thoroughly about the changes, the purposes of the changes, and how to participate in the Mass properly, before asking the people to accept any changes. I was at Queen of Peace Parish in Kingsford, Michigan at the time and took a full six months to give those catechetical homilies and we had no problems with

the people adjusting to the changes.

We were directed to explain to the people that the action of celebrating the Mass on Sundays wasn't going to mean much to the people, no matter what the language or the external rites might be, unless they first devoted some time to personal prayer during the week. That was an official Vatican Council teaching. It was what we learned at the Seminary in somewhat different language, and with different emphases. At the Vatican Council the Church tried to make it easier for people to take more of an active and meaningful part in the Mass. The bottom line was that at Sunday Mass the whole Catholic community was to come to offer itself to God in a public act of worship called a sacrifice.

From the days of Cain and Abel all true worship involved the offering of a sacrifice. Sacrifice as an act of worship is always the offering of a gift to God. The primary gift God asks of us is the gift of ourselves. We offer Him our minds by acts of Faith. Enlightened by faith we would thus place our minds and bodies at his service and acknowledge Him as the Creator of our intelligent as well as bodily nature. In offering our free wills by choosing to love and serve Him as our greatest Good. We recognize Him as the Author of our gifts of freedom to choose and the ability to love.

### **How Is Sacrifice an Act of Worship?**

The word sacrifice comes from two Latin words, “sacrum facere” which mean “to make sacred.” Making something sacred means setting it apart and offering it for a noble purpose. It is the purpose that ennobles the gift and makes it sacred. For example, people offer their lives for their country, to save someone else's life or to serve the poor. Those are all true sacrifices, even if death does not ensue. Losing one's life in reckless or selfish living is a wasted life, not a sacrifice.

The greatest and most noble purpose for which anyone can offer his or her life is for the greater honor and glory of God and in the service of one's fellow man out of the love of God. In sacrifice as an act of worship, we offer to God the gift of ourselves publicly as a community, by giving a share of the fruits of our bodily and mental labors as symbols of ourselves, our love, esteem and gratitude to our Creator, of repentance for our sins, and petitions showing our dependence on Him.

Those are the four major purposes for which sacrifices have been offered all through the Old Testament days. They are the same four dispositions we come to express in the sacrifice of the Mass and in our prayer life.

### **How Can We Deliver Gifts to God?**

This is where the altar comes in. The altar has been designated by God as sort of a "fiction of the law," a sacred place set aside for the purpose of receiving gifts offered to Him, so that anything and everything placed on the altar passes from the possession of the community and from then on belongs to God.

The person authorized to place the gifts of the people on the altar in the name of the whole community has always been called the priest. In the Old Testament sacrifices, lay assistants, not the priests, killed the animals that were to be offered. But it was only the priest who would place the gift on the altar. In the letter to the Hebrews, Sacred Scripture tells us, "Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb 5: 1-2)

We will see all these concepts again and how they are carried out in the actions of the Mass as we take them through. For now the important thing for us to remember is that if we haven't prayed

during the week, personally adoring our God, thanking Him, expressing our personal sorrow for sin and our petitions, we'll be coming to Mass as strangers with very little to offer Him publicly as a community.

Even then, if we come so ill prepared, the least we can do is to try to come a little early and at least read the scriptures for the Mass if we haven't done so at home.

# Chapter Seven

## Thanksgiving for the Reality

### The Resurrection

If there had been no Resurrection and no Easter we would not be reading about the Mass at all. The bodily Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus completed the mystery of our Redemption. The whole mystery of our Passover from the slavery of sin to the freedom in eternal life is celebrated and made present for us at every Mass throughout the year, not only at the Easter Masses.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our Catholic Christian faith. If Jesus had not risen from the dead then our faith is in vain, St. Paul teaches us, and we are the most foolish of people believing in Him and being members of His Church. But Jesus has risen, St. Paul continues, and therefore our faith is on a firm and solid foundation.

And yet for all the excitement of people who saw the risen Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and in other books of Sacred Scriptures, nobody saw Him rise from the dead. We believe that He arose from the dead because so many witnesses saw Him after the Resurrection over a period of 40 days on many occasions and in many different situations.

The risen Jesus ate with the Apostles, went fishing with them. It was after His Resurrection that He made Peter the supreme Shepherd of His Church, gave the Church its power to forgive sins, and the mission to make disciples of all nations, teaching the people to observe all that He has commanded the apostles to teach. He promised that He would be with them and their successors in office all days to the end of time. So there could be no doubt that He had

risen. Every Sunday for nearly 2,000 years the Church has been a witness of the Resurrection to the world. The very fact that Sunday was chosen by the Apostles to replace Saturday as the day of rest and worship because the Risen Lord made his appearance to them on Sunday, the first day of the week, is evidence enough of his Resurrection.

Several years ago I had been invited by the Methodist congregation in Iron River, Michigan to give them a presentation on the burial Shroud of Turin. I spoke about the Resurrection and explained to the people that nobody saw Jesus rise from the dead because Jesus was not about to put on a show. He was not an exhibitionist who would say something like, "You people, stay around for a couple of days and I will really show you something." That would be unworthy of God. He doesn't do things that way.

Then I asked them the question; What do you suppose was the main reason why nobody was to see Jesus rising from the dead? I was rather surprised that almost immediately someone came up with the correct answer. It was, that our relationship with our Creator requires faith from his intelligent creatures. If people saw Jesus rise from the dead, there would no longer be any need for faith. The Gospels tell us that while the apostle Peter was the first one to come to the tomb, John was the first one to believe. Faith in God and in Jesus Whom He has sent to us for our salvation is essential for a proper response to our Creator as His rational creatures. By faith we submit the service of our minds we show our appreciation to God for giving us intelligence. Refusing to believe when God presents adequate evidence separates us from Him. That is pride, the first sin ever committed.

All four Gospels tell us of the many times that appeared to his disciples in his risen Body. At one time he appeared to 500 of them gathered together. But even then people found it hard to believe.

Why? First of all, they did not expect Him as a human being to arise from the dead any more than any of us would expect grandpa or grandma to come out of the grave. Second, Jesus did not arise with His old physical body. It was a body that was transformed into a glorious and spiritual body no longer subject to human limitations, as we noticed in the Easter Gospel, when Jesus entered the room while the doors remained locked. Space, time, material obstructions of any sort were no longer obstacles to the movement of His glorified body. St. John, the first to believe, tells us that all of these appearances are recorded to help us believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith we may be saved. (Note: See Mt 17:2 Transfiguration –“And He was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.”)

Eventually all the Apostles and eight million of the early Christians and other martyrs believed so firmly that they paid for that faith with their lives. There are still two million tombs in the Catacombs with inscriptions and images telling what was uppermost in the minds of those early Christians. I have seen them in the Catacomb of Pope Callistus which holds 100,000 of these tombs. The inscriptions show that it was the Resurrection and the hope of eternal life that gave these people the courage to give their lives for Christ rather than deny Him or His teachings.

The Resurrection continues to empower people to follow the example of these early martyrs in our day. More than thirty priests, a dozen bishops and hundreds of lay people recorded by the Catholic Church alone have died for their faith in the risen Lord during the year 2,002. Besides that, there were hundreds of people from other Christian traditions. With only the support that comes from their baptism and a deep personal faith and love for Christ, they too have paid with their lives for their faith rather than deny him.

One interesting personal example comes from the jungles of Papua, New Guinea. Born one year later than I was, he wanted to go to a seminary to study to become a priest but his father wouldn't let him. At age 18 years he was allowed to enter a catechist school for two and a half year. In 1933 he was sent to his native village to teach the catechism. He distinguished himself for his piety, for his love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In a short time he won over the people to the faith and was transferred to a more difficult mission. On Nov. 11, 1936 Peter married and lived an exemplary family life, his wife bearing three children. Many couples came to him with their problems for advice and guidance.

When the Japanese occupied the island in 1942 and arrested all the priests and religious, Peter was put in charge of the mission. In July 1945 he was put to death for defending the sacred bond of matrimony by refusing to take a second wife as ordered by the Japanese. He embraced his wife, children and mother telling them to be strong and courageous, and said, "I am ready to die in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the salvation of my people." He was 33 years old when he died. On Jan. 16, 1984, Pope John Paul II flew to New Guinea to declare him "Blessed Peter Ro."

By His many appearances Jesus leads us to believe that He arose from the dead, but on our part we are put to the test of freely accepting the evidence and making the Act of faith. We choose to be witnesses to that faith by choosing to observe all that he commanded the apostles to teach us.

# **Chapter Eight**

## **The Gathering**

In Chapter Six we saw that according to the mind of the Church the best preparation for Sunday Mass is the life we lead during the week, starting the Monday before. Personal prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition are to form an integral part of that life. This will be evidence to God that we love Him and are true to His word. Then we will have something that is our own to offer Him publicly on Sunday.

The official beginning of the liturgy of the Mass is the Gathering. Once we have come together as individuals who love God and are true to His word our aim is to form one body, to present ourselves as a community of faith coming to worship Him and seek His peace.

That is why it is important that we all sing the opening hymn. By our voices we unite ourselves and center our attention on a particular theme which will be addressed in the scripture readings for that particular Sunday. By singing with full heart and voice we leave the distractions of everyday life behind and become aware of being a family of God. During the hymn the Procession takes place. That is an integral part of the celebration and represents the whole congregation going some place special.

### **Where are we going?**

We are going to where we will find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit coming to us to make their dwelling with us always. The Blessed Trinity's desire is communicated beautifully by Jesus in the 6<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday Gospel in these words, "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling with him always." This will surely

happen on the Altar. There Jesus will offer Himself to the Father in our behalf through the power of the Holy Spirit sacramentally, making his sacrifice of the cross present for us, just as He made that Sacrifice of the Cross present for the Apostles at the last Supper before it took place on Good Friday.

So it is to the Altar that we are going where all of this will take place. The procession is made up of the ministers of the Mass, the lay reader, leader of song, Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Boys, and the Celebrant. They are escorted by the cross and candle bearers and/or Ushers, which could be women or girls as well as men and boys. Other people or children also can be part of the procession as the occasion may call for, as for instance, when we have a May Crowning ceremony.

The procession should take place with dignity and grace. It is the beginning of an important act of worship, not just a way getting the ministers to the altar in a hurry. Rushing in or out often spoils an otherwise good liturgy.

When there is no singing, each Sunday Mass is provided with an entrance antiphon which can be repeated reverently as long as the procession lasts. It is the first scripture for a given Sunday that we find in a Missalette. However, the mind of the Church expressed in the directions given for the Mass is that a congregation sing, even when there is no organist. With a little effort a cantor or leader of song can always be found. He or she need not be a professional, just someone who is not afraid of making a *joyful noise unto the Lord*. I was impressed by the congregation at Watersmeet, Michigan where the people sang out their hearts with nothing more than the lay reader giving them the pitch on a mouth organ.

In the Sunday Gospel just quoted Jesus is bidding farewell before his Ascension. He is telling his disciples, "You have heard me say, I go

away for a while, and I come back to you.” It is at the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar where we have Him coming back to us in a most important way. It is here and in the Sacrament of Penance that he delivers the farewell gift of his peace to us which will keep us from being disturbed or fearful.

As the Celebrant comes to the Altar, why does he wear vestments, and who determines the color of the vestments? The reason for the vestments is that in offering the sacrifice of the Mass the priest acts in the person of Jesus and in the name of the whole Church. It is Jesus Himself and His Church who are offering the Mass through the priest. So the Church requires him to dress in a way that will show something of the Jesus he represents.

The characters in the drama of the Mass dress to imitate the characters they represent.

There is a long history behind the articles and symbols used for dressing up the ministers. In general, we can say that in every nation and culture the Church uses the art and music that is meaningful to the people of its culture. As for instance, we consider white as the color of joy or victory and black as the color of mourning while in Japan white is the color of mourning.

Green is used for all Ordinary Sundays and week days of the year. It is symbolic of hope and life. Red is used as a symbol of love and martyrdom when blood is shed, and of the Holy Spirit coming in tongues of fire. Purple is symbolic of repentance and is used during Advent and Lent.

To guide the priest and other ministers there is a calendar pad published by liturgical authorities every year which specifies what details are to be observed day by day.



## **Chapter Nine**

### **The Welcome and its Symbols**

Our everyday life is filled with symbols. We could not live and communicate with one another without them. Every word we say is a symbol; a pat on the back, our flag, coats of arms and insignia on them used to identify individuals as well as families, tribes, clubs, secret societies. These are all symbols which tell us something about these institutions. Yet we are hardly aware of their importance. In our modern culture we are too materialistic to pay much attention to poetry and symbolism which lead people to deeper thinking and spirituality. Consequently we are not creating any great literature or music in our nation, and we understand life and our place in society only superficially, if at all.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has been called the greatest drama of all. It is filled with symbols that lead us to a deeper understanding of its meaning. Like all great dramas it begins with an overture, the entrance hymn that we sing, or the entrance antiphon that we repeat during the entrance procession, in the absence of singing are our overture. It sets the theme and mood of our drama for us as a community assembled for worship.

### **The Trinity Sunday Overture**

As an example, let's take, the entrance antiphon for the Trinity: "Blest be God the Father and his only Son and the Holy Spirit: for he has shown that he loves us." This antiphon introduces the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity as the theme for this Mass. It doesn't tell us much about it yet. It is the greatest mystery of our Christian faith. It is not shared with us either by Jews, Muslims, or any other on-Christian faith. It has been revealed to us by Jesus because it is

the very foundation of our Christian calling. This antiphon just gives us a hint that this mystery brings us God's love in a powerful way. Its significance will become clearer as we move through the liturgy.

The Procession Arrives at a very special place. That place is the altar. This is our first major symbol in the drama of the Mass on which our attention is centered. It is a symbol of Christ Himself Whose Sacrifice will shortly will be offered on it. That is why decorations and flower arrangements should be arranged to make the altar stand out rather than take attention away from it. It is the stage on which the drama of the Mass will be enacted.

To this altar we bring the gift of ourselves symbolized by bread and wine. This bread and wine then double up as symbols not just of our lives but of all the gifts we bring to Jesus, our mind enlightened by faith, our will offered through obedience. He will change them and make them acceptable to the Father by changing them into His living Body and Blood which He offered on the Cross.

He alone as the Son of God is completely pleasing in the sight of the Father. By taking us and our gifts into his own sacrificial action through symbols He makes it possible for us to worship and thank God through Him in a completely acceptable manner. In this action He offers himself to the Father with us and our gifts united to what he is offering, that is, himself.

Jesus in turn will make this altar a banquet table from which He will give us His Body and Blood under the appearances of the consecrated Bread and Wine, symbol of him as the Living Bread given to nourish His spiritual life in us.

Mindful of this awesome meaning of the altar, the first thing the priest, and deacon if there is one, is kiss the altar. This kiss reminds us of the kiss of Judas by which Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of

Olives at the beginning of his Passion. It is also a symbol of love and devotion of the priest who has come to the altar as a stand in for Jesus to represent Him and His sacrifice for the people. The priest does not come to the altar to “do his own thing,” but to celebrate the Sacrifice in the name of the whole Church. So this kiss also represents his loyalty and that of the whole Church, and especially of the people of God who have assembled to offer the sacrifice with him. Then, he may greet the people informally, if he wishes. Please also review Chapter 6.

### **The Sign of the Cross**

The priest and people make the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, like the early Christians used it as a password tracing it on each other's body secretly to identify themselves as Christians in a way that could not be noticed by their enemies who would denounce them to the authorities to be condemned to death. It was a symbol of their faith in the Trinity, and of our Redemption by one of the Divine Persons becoming Man and dying on the Cross for us.

### **The First Dialogue**

Next comes the first official dialogue between the priest and people. The priest wishes the people the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” and the people extend the same wish to him. Or, it can be another optional prayer like “the Lord be with you.” The people respond by saying, “And with our Spirit.” Both priest and people are now aware that they are in the presence of God in a special way.

### **The Penitential Rite**

The first thing the gathered flock see in themselves as they stand before God is their own sinfulness. So priest and people together ask Jesus in the penitential rite to forgive their daily sins, the earthly

dust on their feet that they picked up as a pilgrim people on their way to heaven, begging for His mercy. The more serious sins are the matter for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, also called Penance or Confession. But we do not waste time being preoccupied with our own sinfulness.

### **“Glory to God in the Highest”**

As Christians we are a hopeful people, trust God’s love and merciful forgiveness. So at once we break out into praying or preferably singing the Gloria. “Glory to God in the highest.” This is why we came here, to acknowledge God as our Lord, our heavenly King, almighty God and Father, to worship him and give him thanks and to praise him for his glory. We acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ as the only Son of the Father, also Lord God who is one with the Father, who came to this earth, the Lamb of God destined for Sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. We ask Him for his mercy. He is seated at the right hand of the Father ready to hear our prayers of petition. So we ask him to hear them. He alone is Lord, the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father.

What a beautiful, hymn of faith! As we sing it we worship God, praise and thank him, ask him to have mercy on us and to receive our prayer of petition. All four major types of prayer are in this hymn called the Gloria.

### **The Opening Prayer**

The Opening Prayer tells us much more about the theme of this particular Mass. “Father, your Word brings us truth and your Spirit makes us holy.”

Here we begin to see the Love that the Blessed Trinity has for us.

The Father out of love for us has sent his Son to be the Way, the Truth and the Bread of Life. His Son Jesus, from which there is no greater love, gave His life for us. The Holy Spirit is the Wisdom of God who out of love brings us forgiveness and grace to make us holy. What greater love can we think of than the love we experience by these actions of the Blessed Trinity?

This Prayer takes us into the very depth of the mystery of three Persons in One God: "Through them we come to know the mystery of your life." The Blessed Trinity IS God's very life, the life shared with us in baptism, when we were born again of water and the Holy Spirit We became children of God, sharing the life of the three Persons through sanctifying grace which in the words of St. Paul is the seed of our eternal glory.

We pray that as children of God we may walk in the light of Christ, in the radiance of his truth for that is the only way to true joy, and to keep us from darkness of sin and error which never bring anyone joy and prevents people from walking through life as children of God.

With that opening prayer the introductory part of the Mass comes to an end and the liturgy of the Word will take place next.

# Chapter Ten

## Liturgies of the Word

Supernatural mysteries need to be approached one at a time. There are many of them when we speak about the Mass. In this chapter we will deal with the mystery of God's presence in his Word, and meet other mysteries as we do that. As with all mysteries we need to call upon the Holy Spirit for help and guidance. If we keep our minds open to him and his inspirations, he will lead us to all truth. We will stand in awe at truths of God's goodness, beauty and love that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us. We will have much to admire and praise God for. But even then after all is said and done they will still remain mysteries, hopefully understood a bit better.

**The Ordinary:** Some parts of the Mass remain relatively the same throughout the year, with small seasonal changes. These are called the Ordinary of the Mass.

**The Propers:** These parts are different for each Sunday and generally for every day. They are the Entrance Antiphon, Opening Prayer, the whole Liturgy of the Word, the Offertory and Communion Antiphons and Prayers.

### What is this strange word "Liturgy"?

The word is derived from the Greek word "leiturgia" used by the communities in the civic areas of Greek culture. It stood for all the actions or activities they used to carry out a public charge or responsibility. The Church uses the word to include all it does to carry out its mission of public worship as the Christian community. Here is the way the Church describes it in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council:

“Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the actions of the liturgy. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister (it is the same Christ who formerly offered himself on the cross who now offers himself by the ministry of priests) under the appearances of bread and wine. He is present in the sacraments by his power, in such a way that when someone baptizes, Christ himself baptizes, He is present in his word for it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in Church.”

This chapter deals with the Liturgy of the Word and its proclamation. That is one of the actions associated with the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the major topic of this book. All the other actions of the Church that constitute the Church's Liturgy, like the Sacraments, and the Divine Office prayed daily by the clergy and religious Brothers and Sisters are beyond the scope of our present reflections. A careful reading of the Constitution on the Liturgy would complete the description.

### **Proclaiming the Word**

This task of the liturgy of the Word is to Proclaim, not just read, the inspired Word of God from the Scriptures so that it becomes the living Word of God speaking to us in the present. The Scriptures are more than a story of what happened in the past.

The Church has established a three-year cycle of readings for the 33 or 34 Ordinary Sundays, each Sunday taking a passage from one of the three synoptic gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John is used during Lent and all the Sundays of Easter. The first and second readings for Sundays and weekdays are taken from the rest of the books of the Bible. The aim is to give us a taste of the whole of Sacred Scripture during the course of the three years. The Catholic Church has chosen the specific passages so well that the same ones are respected and used by other mainline

Christian churches.

On Sundays there is no intended relationship between the first two readings and the Gospel, except that there is some effort made to correlate the first reading with the Gospel. The second reading for Sunday usually stands by itself but often it does reinforce the Gospel message, like for instance, on the feast of the Transfiguration. (Mt 17:1-8)

The message proclaimed here is the same message taught by Jesus, who walked this earth, recruited and taught His apostles. He sent them into the world, the beginning of His Church, then suffered and died for us. This is the eternal God who is Lord and King of all the earth. At the Transfiguration he and the heavenly Father gave his favored three apostles a glimpse of himself as God. It is a very crucial truth that we need to be fully aware of so we can appreciate God's love for us and rejoice with deep gratitude for being recipients of that love. Therefore, all three readings and the Responsorial Psalm converge to proclaim that message for us. The weekday daily readings follow a two-year cycle.

Before the Gospel, the priest or deacon holds up the book with all readings, called the "Lectionary," for the Congregation to see and acclaim it as the book which brings us the presence of God in his inspired Word. He may also incense the Word. Then he announces it by saying or singing the Alleluia Antiphon. The people respond by singing the Alleluia, which is an exclamation of praise of God. It is always to be sung. If it can't be sung, the directive is that it is omitted. We all stand, out of reverence for the very words of Jesus Himself which are found in the Gospels.

### **The Homily**

The purpose of the Homily is to help us understand what the Lord

is saying and doing as presented in the Readings, and how it applies to our daily Christian life, so that when we come to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we can say with conviction “It is right and Just.”

But there is a catch here. According to the mind of the Church, people are not really ready for a homily until they have been catechized.

### **The RCIA**

Catechetical instructions explain the basic truths about God. This includes our relationship with Him as our Creator. To understand that relationship we need some explanation of these important truths: Creation and our purpose in life, the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God. That is necessary *before* people are ready for a homily. Many bishops think it was a mistake to replace instructions with a homily so quickly, which may be the reason why so many Catholics do not understand their faith very well.

Even before catechetical instruction, the Church has a right order for introducing new members into full communion with the Catholic Church community. It is called the RCIA, the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults. While in specific instances for good reasons, the Rite may be bypassed. It is still the normal way the Church wants done to receive converts into the Church, and the Rite is widely used throughout Church dioceses. There are great benefits, both to the new members and to the parish community that come from using that Rite. The prospective member brought into the Parish community gains new friends in the team members who were involved in conducting the Rite. Then the new convert need not stand alone in a world and society that is largely hostile to the Catholic Church. This could threaten and endanger the newly acquired faith of the new Catholic person if he or she were to stand

alone. Jesus warned His disciples often that opposition could come even from members of their families, and it often does.

Famous converts like Scott and Kimberly Hahn lost a lot of friends when they made their decision to become Catholics. They struggled with that for almost eight years. One purpose of the RCIA is to help new members to make new loving friends to replace those they may have lost. It also strengthens and puts new life into the faith of both the team members and the whole parish as well as of the diocese. At least one of the sessions takes place in the cathedral. It is very edifying to see that you are one of perhaps 1000's taking the same step.

### **Pre-evangelization**

Even before being evangelized people need the gift of faith. Before they can receive it, they need help to arrive at the personal conviction that they have been created for an eternal destiny by God who loves them. They need to be made aware that this places an obligation on them to respond to their creator with recognition and gratitude, through prayer and attention to their spiritual life. That initial grace inviting people to faith is given to all. But God respects the freedom he has endowed them with. He will not force anyone. They must be open to God speaking to them through others and respond through prayer. Without that cooperation with God's grace the gift of faith will be denied them.

This was the problem the people addressed by Jesus in chapter six of St. John's Gospel had. Those Jewish listeners were in no mood to even think about their spiritual life. "You are not looking for me because you have seen signs but because you have eaten your fill of the loaves. You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto life eternal." To prepare people to be disposed to accept evangelization is what pre-evangelization is

about. That calls for a lot of prayer, more than anything else.

### **Evangelization**

People need help to recognize that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, Our Lord and Savior, and therefore that we need to turn to him, follow him and His way of life. Then they are ready and willing to be catechized or to catechize themselves by study and reading. From then on they are qualified to hear a homily. Before that they may not know what the homilist is talking about.

### **The Profession of Faith**

The proclamation of the Word of God and breaking it open for our understanding in a homily will do us no good unless we come disposed to listen to it and to accept the way of life it presents to us. We must want to live a moral life and to change what is contrary to God's will in our lives. If we are so prepared, God will always speak to us through the liturgy of the inspired Word no matter how poor a preacher the priest or deacon may be. The Word of God will not touch us or affect our lives unless we accept and believe it. So on Sundays we publicly profess our faith reciting the Nicene Creed.

### **The Intercessions**

Here we begin to show our concern for the needs of the whole church, the community, and of one another. This is our first effort to carry out what we learned in the liturgy of the Word.

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist Begins**

#### **Summing It Up So Far**

Let us suppose that we have done our best to prepare ourselves both as individuals and as a community of faith to be an acceptable gift to God the Father through the Sacrifice of the Mass. We have expressed sorrow for our daily sins, and received forgiveness for them in the Penitential Rite. We began to express our desire to give God honor and glory in the Gloria. Then we sat down to listen to the Word of God in the Scriptures proclaimed and broken down for us in the Homily, so that through the Holy Spirit it might transform us to become more Christlike and pleasing to the Father as His Son was. We made our Profession of Faith in the transforming truths of our faith. Then we gave witness to the beginnings of lives' so transformed by showing our love and concern for the temporal and eternal welfare of our brothers and sisters in the human family, in our Intercessions.

### **The Offertory**

Now we are ready to offer ourselves to God as an acceptable sacrifice, but we can only do it in and through Jesus the Son of God and in union with His Sacrifice. We will do this ritually as a community of faith at the local level of a Parish in union with the universal Church Jesus himself has founded. Many symbols will come into play. While we cannot offer ourselves physically, we offer the service of our minds and bodies ritually through the symbols of bread and wine. These will be also symbols through which Jesus will give us his Body and Blood to nourish his spiritual life within us.

As we come to offer our sacrifice we bring the symbolic gifts of bread and wine reinforced in our culture with monetary gifts which are also a symbol of all that the faith community needs to carry out its mission. It is always the priest acting as our representative who is authorized to accept these gifts and place them on the altar in our behalf. Offering the bread he prays "Blessed are you, God of all

creation, through your goodness, we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life." The congregation responds with "Blessed be God forever."

### **The Mystery of Water and Wine**

Next the priest, or deacon pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying inaudibly, "*By the mystery of this water and wine* may we come to share in the divinity of Christ Who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

What is this mystery? It is quite evident from the words used. In the Incarnation, Jesus hid His divine nature in our human nature, a great humiliation. The little water symbolizes our human nature that becomes hidden in the wine symbolizing divinity. At the Consecration of the bread and wine this offering united with Christ and His Sacrifice sacramentally will become our sacrifice also. Through him and in Him our sacrifice as human beings makes us true sharers in His divinity through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our sacrifice will then be pleasing to the Father because it is united with that of his Son Jesus in whom the Father is well pleased.

How else could the reality of this great mystery be presented than by using this rite with its symbols? The priest prays over the chalice of wine raising it slightly, "Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink." The congregation responds, "Blessed be God forever." The priest then bows and says, "Lord God, we ask you to receive us and be pleased with the sacrifice we offer you with humble and contrite hearts." Next the priest extends and washes his hands at the side of the altar, saying, "Lord, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins." Naturally, if the priest is to represent the community of faith,

the Church expects him to be faithful to using all the prayers and actions through which she brings him the utmost cleanliness from all that is associated with his own and the people's sinfulness.

The rubrics, instructions in red, that direct the priest what prayers and actions are to be used, are in the Sacramentary. That is the official book of the Church that you see on the altar at Mass. When the rubrics direct that the prayers are to be said *inaudibly* it also explains that this directive applies only when there is singing during those parts of the Mass. If there is no singing the prayers are to be said so they can be heard by the congregation. Most priests seem to be saying them inaudibly, overlooking the second part of that rubric. I was doing the same until at a Priests' Retreat with Archbishop Flynn of Minneapolis, St. Paul, MN. I noticed that he said them all out loud at all the Masses. So I took a closer look at the rubrics to discover that Yes, they are to be said inaudibly only when there is singing at the Mass. Some priests also give their homilies inaudibly?

Standing at the altar, facing the people, the priest extends and joins his hands and says, "Pray, brethren," (or other words which may seem more suitable for the occasion, like "my brothers and sisters") "that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father." The congregation responds with, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Holy Catholic Church."

With hands extended the priest then sings or says the Prayer Over the Gifts which, as we saw before, is Proper for the day's liturgy, meaning it changes either every day or every week, depending on the liturgical season. The people respond with Amen. This is the end of the Offertory Rite.

# Chapter Twelve

## The Preface of the Mass

The Preface of the Mass is the official introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer. There are 84 prefaces all together, a marvelous variety of introductions to the Eucharistic Prayer. Sundays, weekdays and feast days, Memorials of Saints, Rituals for marriages, Christian death, civic observances, anniversaries, and finally, Thanksgiving Day, –all have their proper prefaces. Each preface presents a salutary reflection to help bring out the meaning of the occasion.

### What all the Prefaces have in Common

They all introduce the Eucharistic Prayer as the vehicle that brings us the Eucharist as the supreme Act of Thanksgiving. This gives the liturgy that follows, its name as the Eucharist. The word is derived from the Greek word “Eucharistia” and is translated as “thanksgiving” in English. Also what the prefaces have in common, is that they all provide a major opportunity for the people to participate. The opening dialogue and prayer are likewise common to all, with a slight variation in the prayer, in a few cases.

To begin, the priest sings or says: “The Lord be with you.”

People respond: “ And with your spirit.”

Priest: “Lift up your hearts.”

People: “We lift them up to the Lord.”

The priest gives the major invitation: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” and the response: “It is right and Just.”

*The preface prayer:* “Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus

Christ our Lord.”

Christ is our Thanksgiving. He is our Eucharist. Both priest and people are now alert to how they will be making the perfect Act of Thanksgiving through one of the four main Eucharistic Prayers and accompanying actions. There are three additional prayers for Masses with Children and two for Masses of Reconciliation. They are provided to make the action of this central part of the Eucharist more understandable by children, or in the case of the Masses Reconciliation to show its relevance to our reconciliation being accomplished through the Sacrifice of our Redeemer.

### **Sunday Preface VI As an Example**

Dialogue and prayer as shown above, then:

“In you we live and move and have our being each day you show us a Father’s love: your Holy Spirit dwelling within us, gives us on earth the hope of unending joy. Your gift of the Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead, is a foretaste and promise of the paschal feast of heaven. With thankful praise in company with the angels. We glorify the wonders of your power.”

All the prefaces close with this hymn of praise, sung or recited by people, priest, and choir:

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

## **Heart of the whole Celebration**

Here is where Jesus does what He did at the Last Supper. He celebrates the New Passover with the local Congregation as He celebrated it with the Apostles in the upper room. He does it through the ministry of a validly ordained priest and evidently a different liturgy, though not entirely different.

At their Passover the Jews celebrated the past event of being saved from their slavery to Pharaoh by the blood of the lamb. Celebrating the remembrances brought those events into the present for them. It helped them to thank God for the past salvation to show their fidelity to a Covenant remembered, and to sustain their hope in the future promises.

### **The Eucharistic Prayers:**

The four main Eucharistic Prayers are of ancient origin. Prayer I is a blending of a primitive Roman Canon and the Syrian tradition from Jerusalem. Prayer II is the shortest and the oldest. It is based on the Eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus from the late second century and is the Eucharistic prayer we use for daily Mass and for Ordinary Sundays most of the time. Prayers III and IV come to us from the 4th century and are rooted in the Apostolic Constitutions. Prayer IV is the longest, quite detailed and most solemn, often used for solemn celebrations.

All Eucharistic Prayers invoke the Holy Spirit, through whose power the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This invocation of the Holy Spirit is essential for a valid Eucharist. It is considered so in the Orthodox Church as well as in the Catholic Church. Yet, I find myself at a loss in trying to find the invocation of the Holy Spirit in Eucharistic Prayer I. In all of the Eucharistic Prayers,

***the Invocation is not as strong as it was in the Latin liturgy*** which was used before Vatican Council II. I do, of course, accept and use the current rite as valid. Still, there are some who find it controversial. The action of the Holy Spirit is always understood and implied when the priest spreads his hands over the gifts. ***I do, however, believe that there is room here for a strengthening of the Invocation when used in English, at least in Eucharistic Prayer I.***

It is here, in the Eucharistic Prayer that we come to recognize the Mass as a Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving. That is clear in all the Eucharistic Prayers.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the “heart and summit” of the whole celebration. Here the Consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ takes place. Our lives that we presented at the Offertory symbolized by this bread and wine is now consecrated and nourished.

Essential for the valid consecration is a validly ordained priest to say the words of consecration in the person of Christ. The Orthodox also have validly ordained priests. They are united with the Roman Catholic in word and sacrament, but not in jurisdiction and governance. They do not recognize the Holy Father as the head of the Church. This means they are in schism, a break in the unity that Christ prayed for “that all may be one . . . that the world may believe that you sent me . . . ” (Jn 17:21) The world finds it difficult to believe the gospel in any event. When it sees the Church teaching with a disunified voice, like it does in schism it pays little or no attention to the teachings. There are some Protestant churches like the Episcopal and the Lutheran churches that use the words of Institution in their services. But without a valid priesthood they do not have a valid Eucharist.

### **Testimonies from the Church Fathers**

These truths concerning the requirements for a valid Eucharist have been clearly taught by the Church from Apostolic times. St. Ignatius of Antioch, for instance, who was a disciple of the Apostle John and ordained bishop by St. Peter clearly states that there is no valid Eucharist except that which is under the authority of the Bishop and tells us further that this is the Lord's will and doing. He died in the year 107; reference letter to the Samaritans.

St. Justin who died around the year 165 provides us with a detailed description of the liturgy of the Eucharist in his day that is very much like our current liturgy, even including the collection. (cfr First Apology)

St. Cyprian and St Irenaeus give extensive testimonies to the Catholic teaching and practice concerning the Holy Eucharist in the third century. St. Cyprian is the only Father during the first three centuries who devoted his whole letter to the Holy Eucharist. Reference: "On the Lapsed"

The testimony of the Fathers to these truths is unbroken:

1. In the Eucharist the prayer of thanksgiving brings about a marvelous "change of elements."
2. It makes actual the saving reality of Jesus.

3. The sacrificial death of Jesus is made effective in the lives of believers by their participation in this symbolic action. (Cfr Catholic Layman's Library V.3 p 68.)

Readers desiring a much more extensive treatment of the total Liturgy of the Catholic Church are directed to this work, published by Good Will Publishers, Gastonia, North Carolina.

For someone to presume to use the words of consecration without being a validly ordained priest is no different from you or me trying to act in the name of our government without being empowered to do so by lawfully constituted authority. It doesn't count.

Saying this does not mean that what "our separated brethren" are doing has no value. Archbishop Sheen used to say that depending on the degree of their faith and intentions God can use their actions and prayers as a means to bring them needed graces. Many of them have a very strong personal love for Jesus based on their faith in Him. But the truth remains that they do not receive the abundance of graces that come only through a valid Eucharist. The fullness of all graces is available through the full communion with the Church which Jesus has commissioned to "Teach them (the disciples whom you make) to carry out everything I have commanded you." (Mt 28:20) That is the bottom line directed to the apostles and their duly ordained successors.

The Jews prided themselves when they could document their descent from Abraham. Their candidates for the priestly calling were not admitted as priests, if they could not do so. The priesthood of Aaron, the brother of Moses and Miriam was imperfect in many ways. Abraham looked upon the priesthood of Melchizedek as superior to that of Aaron and Eli. The complete historical succession of the priesthood in Israel is very complex and uncertain.

## **The Consecration at the First Mass**

When the hour had arrived, Jesus took his place at table, and the apostles with him, He said to them, "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . . Then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me. He did the same with the cup after eating saying: This is the New Covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." (Luke 22:14) St. Matthew adds some significant details to what we have just quoted from St. Luke's gospel. Matthew quotes Jesus saying "Take this and eat it. This is my body." Then of the cup Jesus said, "All of you must drink from it, for this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins." Please review Chapter Two for a more complete view of this event.

### **A Reflection on What Jesus Did**

When Jesus took the bread and gave thanks to the Father he was about to offer Himself as a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving. Through the power of the Holy Spirit he changed the bread into his Body then and there and identified it with His Living Body present there before his disciples. It was the same Body in the sacramental form of bread and wine that they would see hanging on the Cross physically the next day.

So Jesus offered the same Sacrifice of himself in two different ways. First he offered it at the Last Supper in an un-bloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine. In this manner he offered it not only to the heavenly Father but also to his Church so that both his Presence and his Sacrifice would be perpetuated by the Church offering it in his Name to the end of time. Whenever the Church would offer it again, the work of our redemption would be continued, applying the fruits of the sacrifice to our needs. Christ's

Sacrifice offered in this un-bloody manner is what he commanded the apostles to do “In Remembrance” of him and his death on the Cross in a painful and bloody manner. That is the second manner in which Jesus offered his Sacrifice. This will not be repeated. Jesus is in glory interceding for us. He died once and will never die again. It will remain a mystery of God's love for us and of the hideousness of sin. But it is much more easily understood and accepted by the average person in our present culture because there is a physical body and a Cross to be seen and violence to be witnessed.

The first manner of Christ's Sacrifice which is our Mass presents greater problems for modern man. In our culture, if one can call it culture, people have a hard time with abstract concepts like sacramentality. They may be able to identify a few symbols but, they find it difficult to accept the idea that a symbol could be a reality at the same time. This could be a long discussion. So let's just say that the first requirement for a relationship with our Creator is Faith. Actually no good human relationships can be developed or endure without human faith and trust either.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is a mystery that requires faith and participation. At the same time it offers us the privilege to be present at the foot of the Cross and to deepen our faith.

When Jesus said “Do this in remembrance of me,” he commanded the apostles to do what he had just done. With that command he gave them power to do it. Repeating his whole action of changing bread and wine into his body and blood and offering him as the Sacrifice of the New Covenant was not possible for them without being given that power. This empowerment to offer his Sacrifice was their ordination to act as priests in his name.

Jesus celebrating the Passover as a Jew with Jewish apostles would be depending on the power of the celebration to bring what Jesus

and his apostles did at the Last Supper into the present.

But here Jesus was establishing a New Covenant in which the Holy Spirit is the active and empowering agent. Just as the Holy Spirit brought Jesus into our world by “overshadowing” Mary, his Virgin Mother, so the power of the Holy Spirit brings Him to us as the principal celebrant of the New Passover sacrifice. It was the will of Jesus Himself that this empowerment by the Holy Spirit take place only when passed on to his priests by the apostles and their successors. He wanted to ensure that this precious gift would be properly cared for, safeguarded and taught without error. In the light of the Holy Spirit the power of ancient traditions had to fade from sight, no matter how helpful they had been by typifying and foreshadowing the mysteries of the New Covenant.

### **The Priest Acting in Jesus’ Name**

In Eucharistic Prayer II, immediately after the Preface the priest addresses the heavenly Father with these simple words, as he spreads his hands over the bread and wine, “Lord, you are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness. Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He makes the sign of the Cross over the gifts at the words Body and Blood.” He then joins his hands and continues with this narrative clearly and distinctly:

“Before he was given up to death, a death he freely accepted (The priest takes the bread and raising it a little above the altar, says) “He took the bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said: (bowing slightly.) “Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my Body which will be given up for you.” He shows the consecrated host to the people, places it on the paten, genuflects to adore Jesus now present and continues:

“When supper was ended, he took the cup.” He takes the chalice, raises it a little above the altar and says: “Again He gave you thanks and praise, gave it to his disciples, and said”: (priest bows slightly.) “Take this, all of you and drink from it: This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.” The priest then shows the chalice to the people, places it on the corporal and genuflects in adoration. Then he sings or says: “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” The people and celebrant respond: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” There are three other options for this proclamation. The priest with con-celebrants, if any, continues:

“In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this saving cup. We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.

### **A Reflection**

What is “this life-giving bread” and “this saving cup” that we just offered to the Father saying above prayer? At the Offertory it was the bread and wine we brought to the altar as symbols of ourselves. Now the Consecration is over and the gifts we brought are a living Person, Jesus crucified and risen from the dead. This is He we are offering to the Father when we say this prayer.

### **The Church Remembers Her Whole Family, Militant, Suffering, and in Glory (Triumphant)**

Jesus wanted us to do what he had done in ‘Remembrance of him.’ But He also remembers us all and wants us to remember our brothers and sisters in the human family, both the living and the

dead. Above all he wants us to remember those who believe in Him, in whom He has planted the “seed of eternal glory” through baptism. These form what we call the Communion of Saints, His mystical Body, or simply His Church.

The Church Militant is all of us Christians on earth, a pilgrim people on the way to glory but in combat with temptation and evil. We need the prayers of the whole communion of saints to help us.

The Church Suffering is all Christians who completed their pilgrimage here on earth, but like the three apostles with Jesus at His Transfiguration are not yet ready to face the fullness of God's infinite glory. So the heavenly Father in His love sends them a cloud temporarily to shield them from the brilliance of His glory until they are fully purified by God in His own way “as if by fire.” We call this purification their Purgatory. They too need the prayers of the whole Church.

The Church Triumphant is made up of all the children of God whom the heavenly Father has brought home through the merits of the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. Most, we believe, have had all the help and graces that their faith in Jesus and membership in His Church brought them. Others too will be welcomed into His eternal kingdom through merits of Christ's sacrifice. Some may never have heard the Good News, but have recognized God as their Creator and believed in Him and sincerely tried to do His will even at times giving their lives in defense of truth as they were given the grace to see it.

The Church sets up certain saints to be our role models here on earth by canonizing them because of their heroic love. They loved their brothers and sisters in the human family while they were on earth. We can count on them to love us and intercede for us now that they are in heaven. Jesus is our Mediator, true, we can go to him directly and we should. But the saints are his special friends. He

may want us to honor his friends by going to them and let them speak up for us. He may even prefer to have it that way.

He may be more willing to listen to them than to us. After all he lived on earth and knows human ways, how we are more likely to listen to our special friends than to others. We will be honoring him by honoring them. As members of the Communion of Saints they became saints by their heroic love on earth they will not stop loving us in heaven where they are not limited by a lack of time. This is especially true of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. "God's Friends are my Friends" was the title of a little book published some years ago.

### **The Prayers for Remembering**

In Eucharistic Prayer II: The celebrant or one of the con-celebrants says:

"Lord, remember your church throughout the world: make us grow in love, together with Francis our Pope, Gregory our bishop, and all the clergy." In Masses for the deceased, the following may be added: "Remember Name," whom you have called from this life. In baptism he/she died with Christ. May he/she also share in his resurrection."

The Celebrant or a con-celebrant continues:

"Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again: bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence. Have mercy on us all. Make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the virgin Mother of God, with the apostles, and with all the saints who have done your will throughout the ages. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory."

## **A Majestic Closing of the Mass as a Sacrifice**

“Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen

# Chapter Fourteen

## The Gifts We Receive

### The Communion Rite

“Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross! Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name. So that at Jesus’ name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ IS Lord!” (Canticle Phillipians 2:6-11)

And Here he is! He humbled himself still further, beyond human comprehension, to be with us under the form of a humble particle of food and drink to be eaten and thus to nourish his life in us as his brothers and sisters!

He has come to us through the Eucharistic Prayer of the Sacrifice of the Mass! He invites us to be His guests, but come as His brothers and sisters. If we are not reconciled with one another and do not act like brothers and sisters, we remain excluded from the family and cannot truthfully call God “Our Father.”

So the Communion Rite begins with him inviting us to come to the heavenly Father with the “boldness of children” – in the words of the Catholic Catechism, “We dare to say Our Father” with confidence.

From the burning bush Moses heard a voice saying to him, “Do not

come near, put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” In other words, Do not dare come into the holy presence of your God in your sinful condition. One of the early church Fathers, Tertullian, remarked, “When would a mortal dare call God ‘Father’, if man’s most innermost being were not animated from on high?”

The expression God the Father had never been revealed to anyone before Jesus. He the Son of the Father, who became man and revealed God as our Father. This personal relationship of the Son of God to God his Father is something that neither men nor angelic powers can understand, even dimly.

And yet the Holy Spirit makes him known and grants us who believe that Jesus is the Christ, a participation in that same relationship, as adopted sons and daughters. That participation in this mystery of Jesus the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit take place principally through Baptism, the Mass, and the other Sacraments.

When we come to address God as Our Father we come with humble and trusting hearts which enable us to be like children, for it is to little children that the Father is revealed. No wonder that Jesus teaches us so often that unless we become like little children we will not enter the kingdom of God.

He is teaching mankind a new relationship with God by God's grace and not because of what we did. God has brought us into a new and eternal covenant in Christ. We have become his adopted children and He is our Father. St. John Cassian tells us that this brings to our prayer to God a warmth of love, saying “the soul is molded and directed to love him, and to speak very familiarly to God, as to its own Father with special devotion.”

St. Augustine says it this way: “***Our Father***”; At this name love is

aroused in us . . . and the confidence of obtaining what we are about to ask for. What would he not give to his children who ask, since He has already granted them the gift of being his children?"

So before Holy Communion we bring seven petitions with confidence to the Father in words our Savior taught us. The reason that the Catechism devotes 75 pages and St. Thomas wrote a whole book on it is because the Church looks upon this prayer as a summary of the whole Gospel.

### **The Our Father**

1. Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
2. Thy kingdom come,
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Give us this day our daily bread.

If we mean what we say when pray the first three of these petitions, then we should be working to bring honor and glory to God's name and person, we should be working toward making His kingdom of justice and love a reality on earth, toward the accomplishment of His will on earth as it is in heaven.

God's will is the salvation of all mankind. We are then to care about the salvation of our brothers and sisters in the human family and help open the door to Christ for them, "for no other name under heaven has been given to men, by which we can be saved." (Acts 4:12) We will do that when we give good examples, ourselves using the means Jesus has provided for our salvation.

These means are: prayer, the commandments, the Sacraments, works of mercy and the guidance of his Church. Other positive steps we can take to promote the heavenly Father's name, His kingdom and His will are: supporting the missions and promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and praying for them.

Without our cooperation, these words of the 'Our Father' will be empty words and not really be showing any concern that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The fourth petition is "Give us this day our daily bread." Here we ask for all our daily needs. It also means that we use the talents and energy the Lord has given us to find ways to earn what we need and to trust that He will help us to meet our needs without undue worry and concern. He asks us to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all the rest of our needs will be taken care of. Note also, the word "our." This is a family prayer and recognizes that we have to include the whole human family in our concern for their "daily bread" as well as our own.

If we don't make a reasonable effort to take care of our needs, trusting the Lord's providence and do not work for justice for others we are not praying the 'Our Father' well enough to be heard. We are stewards of the world's resources and our "brothers' keepers."

The last three petitions of the "Our Father," are grouped by St. Thomas Aquinas around the need to keep away from evil. The fifth petition is for forgiveness, because the greatest evil we have to struggle against is sin. In greater or lesser matters we all at times miss the target of doing God's will. That is what sin is. To be freed from this evil, we need forgiveness. So we ask, "Forgive us our trespasses." There are two things we need to do here. First of all we need to acknowledge and confess our own sin before God and secondly, we must forgive those who have sinned against us. In fact, if we don't forgive others this is a dangerous prayer to say because in effect we are asking not to be forgiven. Sometimes people have a terrible time trying to forgive. This, in my experience, has been especially true in cases of divorce and rejection or serious family problems. The best thing one can do in a case like that is to pray "Jesus, I just don't have the strength to forgive this person. Please

forgive him or her for me, but find a way of doing it through me, so that I too can be forgiven for my sins. In a case like that it is also an important time to call on our Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary for help.

“Lead us not into temptation” is the sixth petition. God does not lead anybody into temptation. The original Greek word means “Do not allow us to enter into temptation to the point of consenting to it.” Other languages likewise follow the original Greek: “ka'i me e'isenev'kes `emas `eis peirasmon” or the Spanish “No nos dejes entrar en tentation.” We cannot avoid all occasion of sin and temptation, living in the world. Temptation can serve a good purpose by testing our virtue and our love for God, or our fidelity to our vocation in life. Our goodness is not really fully meritorious until it is tested by the opposite inclinations or temptations. It can be innocence but not virtue. It is important that the Holy Spirit helps us discern between the temptation itself and consenting to it, and to help us recognize the dangers in an occasion of sin. We must avoid at all costs placing ourselves into the proximate occasion or situation where most people are likely to fall into or walk into sin. This help of the Holy Spirit in dealing with temptation is what we ask for in this petition. Knowingly putting ourselves into a near occasion of serious sin is really a sin against the Holy Spirit. Jesus shows us how to deal with temptation. We must not dally with it or argue with the tempter like Eve and Adam did in the Garden.

The 7th and last petition is, “But deliver us from evil.” None of us want evil to come into our lives. But sometimes evil presents itself to us under the appearance of good, just like Eve was attracted to sin under the appearance of fruit that was beautiful to behold. In other words, we are deceived. When we ask to be delivered from the evil one, we pray as well to be delivered from all evils, past, present, and future, of which Satan is or was the author or instigator. Praying the ‘Our Father’ in union with the whole Church

at Mass, we pray for the whole human family and ask for it the deliverance from the evil one through Christ Our Lord.

### **The Communion Liturgy Extends the Our Father**

With extended hands the priest continues alone: “Deliver us Lord from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” The priest joins his hands, the people respond with:

“For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours, now and forever.”

### **The Peace Rite**

The priest with extended hands says this prayer aloud:

“Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live forever and ever.” The priest joins his hands as he says the last phrase. The people answer: “Amen!” The priest extending his hands toward the people adds: “The peace of the Lord be with you always.”

That assurance of peace with God and with our neighbor is one of the fruits of Christ’s Sacrifice. It is necessary for our happiness even here on earth, so the Church continues to keep it before us in the prayers that follow the Lord’s prayer until Communion.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, gives us this directive: “Before they share in the One Bread, the faithful implore unity for the Church and for the whole human family with some sign of love for one another.”

After the prayer for peace, both priest and people extend that peace to each other. The priest or deacon invites the whole congregation, "Let us offer each other the sign of peace." It is the Church's desire and in keeping with the whole structure of the Mass as an action that is integral to the attainment of peace that the Sacrifice is being offered for. The clergy alone cannot bring Christ's peace to the human family without the laity doing their part, brothers and sisters reaching out to one another a peaceful hand of friendship and brotherly love. If they will not do it when it is called for within the liturgy, will they do it when they are sent forth after the Mass to bring it to the world?

### **The Agnus Dei Lamb of God**

The breaking of the Consecrated Bread takes place here and is an integral part of the Mass. It is a repetition of the action of Jesus breaking Bread at the last Supper and symbolic of him sharing Himself in the Eucharist. It is also a Remembrance of Jesus feeding the multitudes with the five loaves and two fish. John the Baptist pointing out Jesus, as the Promised Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world, is recalled by singing or reciting the prayer, "Lamb of God." This is usually done three times, but the prayer may be recited as long as it takes to complete the breaking of the bread where necessary.

### **Receiving Holy Communion**

As the Agnus Dei prayer is being concluded he priest picks his Host up, breaks it over the paten or chalice, breaks off a small piece and drops it into the consecrated wine. While he does that he says this beautiful prayer inaudibly:

"May this mingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus

Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.”

This action is symbolic of the Resurrection. The body and blood of Jesus separated at his death on the Cross were reunited, as he rose in a glorious risen living body.

Then joining his hands, the priest says inaudibly one of two short prayers before his own Communion. He genuflects, picks up the Host and holding it over the chalice slightly raised presents the Lamb of God to the people as he faces them. He says aloud:

“This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are they who are called to his Supper.”

Priest and people respond with:

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

Readers will recognize that prayer as the prayer of the Roman Centurion as Jesus offered to come and heal his son.

The priest facing the altar says inaudibly: “May the body of Christ bring me to life everlasting,” and consumes the Sacred Host. Then he takes the chalice and says inaudibly: “May the blood of Christ bring me to everlasting life” and reverently drinks the blood of Christ. When the priest is receiving Holy Communion, the choral group may begin to sing a communion hymn. The congregation generally finds it impractical to be carrying a hymnal while coming to receive. The choral group comes to the altar at the end of the line, or a lay minister may bring holy communion to them.

The people proceed to receive Jesus, either under the form of consecrated bread or of wine or of both, as the whole Risen Living Lord. The Body and Blood of the living Jesus are shared, not

broken, when the Sacred Host is broken or Precious Blood divided. He is present so long as the broken Particle retains its identity or sign as food or drink. To receive Him under both species, brings back a practice from ancient times and contributes to a more complete sign of nourishment. That also responds to the action of Jesus instituting the sacrament at the last supper, saying, "He who eats . . . and drinks, abides in me and I in him." 'But either specie brings us the Living Person that is received. The blood of Christ is contained in the host, in the form of bread. There is no Living Body without the Blood, and no live blood without a living body. We should also keep in mind that at the Last Supper, those present and receiving this new command was all His Apostles, His first real priests, ordained and chosen by Him. There were no other people recorded as being at the Last Supper, including His own Holy Mother. In situations where the person is not able to swallow even a small Particle, he/she may possibly be able to receive the Precious Blood from a spoon.

In other situations a quantity of wine sufficient for the whole congregation may not be available. But that does not prevent the celebrant from distributing Holy Communion under both Species because it may be done conveniently by intinction, with the priest dipping the Sacred Host in the Precious Blood, which requires only a little wine. In this case the priest must place the dipped host on the tongue of the person receiving.

When a person chooses to receive the host in the hand, the procedure is to place the left hand under the right hand while cupped to receive the precious Body of Christ in the hand to be immediately consumed. Consumption should take place by stepping aside and immediately and reverently place the Eucharist into one's mouth, careful not to drop the Body of Christ. Then, the person proceeds to their pew to spend quiet moments with Christ and listen, or speak through your mind, those things one wish to bring

to God. We should mention that while coming forward to receive God, our hands should not be dangling down our side, we should be in a prayerful statue while approaching the Eucharist. We should also address the appropriate dress. Women should be dressed appropriately, not in distracting eye-catching attire and men should be dressed in a respectful manner as well. We are coming before God and King. Using common sense and mindful of respect for God, and those attending Mass, is all one need to consider to be proper.

One further thing we should keep in mind and that is the act of fasting before receiving. There was a time when fasting before receiving Our Lord began at midnight the night before. Then it was moved to three hours before, and now of course only one hour before. How little we sacrifice to prepare to receive Our Lord with modern changes. This means no food or flavored beverage before as well as candy or gum. Traditional priests will fast three hours before Mass. The church is asking so little of us to allow us the ability of no excuses for receiving Our Lord and the graces of the Mass and Eucharist. But, we must always be mindful of being without mortal sin and even if we have small or venial sins, those too still need to be confessed to a priest in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Please note, that if one needs to take medications just before Mass, that is permitted, along with water if necessary. And water can be taken before Mass. There is not fast require regarding water, but within reason of course. The purpose of this is also for consideration of becoming sick and vomiting the Eucharist after receiving. Again, the point here is respect for “The Body of Christ.”

Should a “Host” be accidentally dropped, the priest or Eucharistic Minister is to be immediately drawn to attention. The fear of dropping a host is often good reason to receive on the tongue rather than in the hand.

There is some discussion about whether one should kneel or stand when receiving the Lord. Prior to Vatican II, all Catholic Churches had a communion railing. The meaning and symbol of the communion rail are twofold. One they symbolized the holy area of the altar and the reverence of receiving Our King while kneeling. Those who favor kneeling say that it is a sign of recognizing Jesus in the Holy Eucharist as our God and humbling our self before him. Our human experience is that when a distinguished guest enters into a gathering, those present welcome him or her by standing up, but when one meets Royalty, one bows and kneels before the King.

With communion rails removed, or not installed in new churches, there is little more that one can do, other than to use common sense and receive while standing, however, never is communion to be denied to a person that kneels before God to receive Him. Without the communion rail, it is difficult for elderly or people with physical challenges to kneel at floor level. Obviously a communion rail provides the appropriate physical height. This is not an issue of faith and morals.

We must be mindful that traditional practice of the sacraments and liturgy has repeatedly both past and present, produced an increase in vocations. And that more frequent and consistent attendance at Sunday and daily Mass, a greater respect for the sacraments of Penance, and an overall heightened awareness of the sacred, sacrificial nature of the liturgy. Therefore, the more a person educates oneself to the truths of the faith, the more one can worship God with a sense of awareness.

As each person comes to receive, the priest, or Eucharistic Minister, takes a Host from the ciborium, raises it momentarily to show it, and says: "The body of Christ." The person says "Amen." Presenting the chalice the same way, he says: "the blood of Christ" with the communicant saying another "Amen."

After all have received, the vessels are cleansed and the priest goes to the chair for a brief thanksgiving, or a hymn may be sung. The priest stands at the chair or at the altar and sings or says: "Let us pray" and continues with the Post Communion Prayer proper for that Mass.

### **The Concluding Rite and Dismissal**

Extending his hands as he faces the people, the priest sings or says: "The Lord be with you." Then he blesses the people using these words:

"May almighty God bless you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The People answer "Amen."

There are other blessings for certain days, many of them multiple. The deacon, if there is one, or the priest sings or says: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." There are two other options. The Priest kisses the altar and all the ministers leave the sanctuary.

You may remember that you have witnessed some changes in what we respond to some of the sections of the Mass as compared to a year or so ago. This is due to the translations to the vernacular was not as clear as they were in Latin. Latin is a language that is called dead. It is called a dead language because no new words have been created since it was widely spoken and the meaning of the words can never change, as in the English language. And this, has caused some issues in other languages as well.

## Chapter Fifteen

### God's Gifts to Us Through the Mass

#### The First Gift

“Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify him in himself.” (Jn 13:31)

Those are the words of Jesus spoken just before He was about to renew and deliver the sacrifice of Himself in the bloody manner of the way to the Cross and finally his death on it. He had already offered himself to the Father in an un-bloody manner on Holy Thursday.

In a passage from the gospel according to John that we read at the Mass on Tuesday of Holy Week Jesus is saying that through all these sufferings and death he as the Son of Man (God in our human nature) is glorified and God will be glorified in him. How can this be?

How can suffering and the offering of one's life bring glory to God or to a person? The Messianic passage from the prophet Isaiah used as the first reading at that same Tuesday Mass provides the key to the answers. This is the passage:

“I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the world.” (Is 1:6) In these few words the Holy Spirit reveals the heavenly Father's plan and purpose for sending the promised Messiah into the world. He would make him “a light to the nations” so that the Father's salvation may be available to all who accept the Messiah as their light.

In other words, God's supreme law ‘Suprema Lex -is Salus Animarum’ - the salvation of souls. God loved us and created us to

his own image and likeness and wants us back with him to share his life of perfect happiness for all eternity. This is God's glory, to have his intelligent creatures, mankind and angels, with him and loving him forever. At the same time that would be their life in glory. But this is not the totality of God's glory, His greatest glory is in his own perfections, and in the love relationship between the three Persons constituting the Blessed Trinity. His intelligent creatures are expressions of his love and creative power. As such, they do contribute substantially to his glory. That is one reason why His will is their salvation, so much so that He seeks and pursues even one who goes astray and rejoices when the stray returns. In the light of this reflection, I think we begin to see the meaning of that quotation from the Gospel according to John: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify him in himself." (Jn 13:31)

If the salvation of even one human being contributes to the glory of God whose supreme desire is the salvation of mankind then we can see immediately that God has been glorified in Jesus when he offered himself, his life, sufferings, rejection, and death to him for the salvation of all mankind. It follows also that all our acts of love and sacrifices that we have to make to be faithful to our daily duties contribute to the glory of God as they contribute to our own salvation. All the trials, sufferings, rejections and humiliations that we have to endure as we try to bring others and ourselves to Jesus our Savior likewise take on new meaning and contribute to the glory of God.

The beautiful part about Jesus and ourselves bringing glory to God by our concerns for the salvation of others is that both Jesus and us will be glorified in him. Some religious writer said "The glory of God is man fully human." The implications of that statement are vast. Let's use it for our meditation. But if you wonder what it means to be fully human there is an answer. That answer is Jesus. The more

we reflect on Him the better we shall learn what being fully human entails.

### **Now We know What the First Gift is that the Mass Brings Us**

The first gift is the opportunity and occasions the Mass gives us to come together to give glory to God and make it possible to do so. The Mass makes it possible for us to offer Him the service of our lives, our sufferings and joys in a sacrifice that expresses our faith, love, adoration and thanksgiving in an acceptable manner by uniting them with the sacrifice of "His well beloved Son." Without the Mass we have no way to unite ourselves and meager offerings with the Sacrifice of Jesus which alone is fully acceptable and pleasing to God. We come as sinners to offer ourselves in sacrifice. Jesus comes with a human nature that makes it possible for him to perform human actions. But because they the actions of an infinitely perfect Divine Person they have an infinite value. The value of a person's actions is measured by the dignity of the person doing them. Our actions are not only human but actions of disobedient children. They cannot redeem us, much less anybody else. Neither can they bring God glory any more than a disobedient child brings glory to its parents. It is our union with the sacrifice of Jesus, a Divine Person that gives our offerings value and redemptive power. The Mass brings them into that union.

### **The Greatest Gift**

The greatest gift that the Mass brings us is a person. How thrilled we would be to be gifted with a person as our partner for life who is perfectly lovable and would love us perfectly forever. What a Dream? But it isn't just a dream. It is the Truth. The Person Who comes to us through the Holy Spirit and the Consecration at the Mass is such a Person. He comes to us as a man fully human who

died for us. Yet he is risen from death and alive to continue loving us now and forever. Wow! Greater love there can never be. He can do this because “this man is the Son of God,” one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

### **Our Union With Jesus**

Paragraph 1391 of the Catholic Catechism teaches us: “Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” (Jn 6:56) Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet. “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.” (Jn 6:57)

### **To Elucidate**

Expressions often taken for granted by teachers and academics present problems for the average person, even for collegians at times. They did it for me for a long time, when they have never been defined clearly: “The Holy Eucharist” or simply the “Eucharist” means the “living, risen Jesus” a Person, present in a special way, that is, under the appearances of bread and/or wine. Holy Communion is receiving the Eucharist. It is an action. Eucharist has at times been defined as an act of Thanksgiving and the Mass too has been called an act of thanksgiving. The words Eucharist and Mass are often used interchangeably. That is confusing too just about everybody.

Consecration means saying the words Jesus used by a duly ordained priest in His name, to change the bread and wine into His Body and Blood. Transubstantiation is the word used by the Church in an effort to describe the change that takes place during the

Consecration. It is based on the way that the Greek philosopher Aristotle explained reality to his disciples. This was adopted by St. Thomas Aquinas and the Church for the Scholastic School of philosophy. But it is not the way our modern experimental science looks at reality. It has to dissect everything and look at it under the microscope. This limits it to examining material things. Scholastic philosophy, on the other hand, looks at reality with the human mind and notices that there is always something there that science does not perceive. What science sees, philosophy calls 'appearances' or 'accidentals.' What science does not see philosophy calls the 'substance' or reality which by the laws of nature is associated with certain accidentals that are proper to that particular substance and identify it for us. Let's take an example. A hen will set on a nest egg. To her the egg looks like the egg she laid. Those are the appearances of an egg. The substance happens to be a composite or plastic. She can set on that egg all year but will never hatch a chick.

The Mass will remain a supernatural mystery. But Jesus worked four natural miracles described in a previous chapter to dispose his Jewish audience to believe in Him as the Son of God who has power over the laws of nature. As God, with that power He could change the substance of bread into the substance of His Body without changing the appearances. In the same way He would change the substance of wine into the reality (substance) of His Blood while permitting its appearances as wine to remain. The Jewish people, of course, did not need to know this Greek concept of reality to believe. All they needed was the evidence of His power over the laws of nature. But for those of us able to follow this reasoning, it should serve to deepen the faith in the Holy Eucharist that we already have.

## **A Summary Review of the Mass**

Would it not clarify our understanding to keep in mind what the Mass is? It is the New Passover Sacrifice in which Jesus offered Himself to the Father ritually, together with the apostles, for the redemption of mankind.

He offered Himself physically on the Cross as the new Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He made mankind a new creation now able to offer the Trinity due and pleasing worship, adoration thanksgiving, and reparation through Him. At the right hand of the Father He pleads for us and our petitions.

### **What Union With Jesus Produces in Us**

Paragraph 1392 of the Catholic Catechism: “What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh “given life and giving life” through the Holy Spirit, preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received in baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage on earth. When it will be given to us as food for the final journey to eternity, in danger of death, Holy Communion is called Viaticum. This simply adds to our understanding of the Holy Eucharist the fact that when we are privileged to receive Jesus on the day we are to die or close to it we will not go into eternity alone. He will be with us as our companion. In ancient Rome the word viaticum meant “the provisions given to someone setting out on a journey” - Via meaning journey; tecum –with you.

St. John Chrysostom wrote in his catechism “As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom He Himself has given

life.” Another Father of the Church, whose name I do not recall, says it all in a nutshell when he notes that while we receive the “Food” into our bodies, in the case of Jesus, His Body as the Bread of life will gradually change us into Himself and make us more Christlike.

### **Our Union With Jesus Strengthens Our Virtue of Love**

Paragraph 1394: “As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life, and this living charity wipes away venial sin. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him.” “Lest our kind readers be confused by the words ‘charity’ and ‘love’ being used interchangeably in this paragraph let us take note that in English they are not synonyms. That means they are analogous, with closely related meanings, but not interchangeable.

Love is an infused Christian virtue and a participation in divine life that should inspire us to works of charity. True works of charity are rooted in love. But what we call charitable works are not always motivated by the virtue of love of God or neighbor, like the charitable deeds of the Pharisees, done for show, not out of love.

Paragraph 1395 continues: “By the same charity (better read ‘love’ here to understand this paragraph) that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share in the life of Christ and progress in his friendship and love the less likely will we break away from him by mortal sin. The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins. The sacrament of Reconciliation has been instituted to restore the state of grace lost by serious sin. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church. “ *For better understandings please add the following words after the word Church*”: And are in

the state of grace, that is, not conscious of unconfessed mortal sin. We skipped Paragraph 1393 because it can very easily confuse the average reader. What it is trying to say has been said clearly in the paragraphs we already used.

### **The Eucharist Our Pledge of Future Glory**

Paragraph 1402":In ancient prayer the Church acclaims the mystery of the Eucharist:

“O sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us. . . . if we are united with him through Holy Communion, then His Passover leading Him to glory becomes our Passover also leading us to eternal glory.”

Paragraph 1403: At the Last Supper the Lord himself directed his disciples' attention toward the fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God: "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns her gaze "to him who is to come."

'Paragraph 1404: The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the Eucharist "awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ," asking "to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away. On that day we shall see you, our God, as you are. We shall become like you and praise you forever through Christ our Lord."

Paragraph 1405: There is no surer pledge or dearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness

dwells," than the Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ."

### **Our Final Quotation**

"He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn 6.54)

The Catholic Catechism has 97 Paragraphs teaching us about the Mass and the Holy Eucharist as its greatest Gift, the Presence of Jesus Himself. To try to quote and integrate the rest of those paragraphs into this book with some needed clarifications of the language used, would be going far beyond the announced purpose of this book. That purpose was to present more simply and clearly the teachings of the Catechism that otherwise tends overwhelm and sometimes confuse the average reader both by the volume of material presented and by the language used.

Actually the remaining paragraphs are almost all quotations taken from the teachings of the early Fathers and saints down through twenty centuries. The Church wants to show us here that this is what she taught, and what the followers of Jesus always believed throughout her history. Therefore this is the authoritative teaching of Christ that he wants us to believe and accept. It is my sincere hope that you have taken from this little book a better understanding of the Mass, its purpose and sanctity. May God bless you and keep you safe from all harm. Sincerely, –Joseph Adam Gondek