

The Sacrifice of the Mass
FORETOLD BY MALACHIAS THE PROPHET

"For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts." (Malachias 1:11)

THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

"And it was almost the sixth hour; and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' And saying this, He gave up the ghost." (Luke 23:44-46)

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: 'Take ye, and eat: this is My Body, Which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me.' In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: 'This chalice is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me.' For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

What is the Mass?

The unbloody re-enactment of the sacrifice which Christ offered to God on Calvary - but which He now offers through the priest under the appearances of bread and wine.

1. What is a sacrifice?

A sacrifice is the offering of a gift to God by a priest, and the destruction of the gift.

2. Can there be true religion without sacrifice?

No, because true religion has to have some external, public act by which men can demonstrate their worship of God.

3. Were there sacrifices before the coming of Jesus Christ?

Yes, God made Aaron and his sons priests and commanded them to offer sacrifices to Him. "But thou and thy sons look ye to the priesthood: and all things that pertain to the service of the altar, and that are within the veil, shall be executed by the priests." (Numbers 18:7)

4. How were the sacrifices of the Old Testament offered?

Usually the priest would take an animal, offer it to God, kill it and then burn it on an altar.

5. Why were the sacrifices of the Old Testament imperfect?

They were imperfect because... "It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away." (Hebrews 10:4)

6. What was the perfect sacrifice?

Jesus Christ offered the perfect sacrifice when He died on the Cross. "But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, forever sitteth on the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12)

7. How was the death of Jesus Christ the perfect sacrifice?

It was perfect because both the priest and victim were not only man but also God. "But now once at the end of ages, He hath appeared for the destruction of sin, by the sacrifice of Himself." (Hebrews 9:26)

8. Did Jesus intend that His sacrifice be continued?

Yes, because He instituted the Mass, which is the representation of His sacrifice on the Cross.

9. Who offered the first Mass?

Jesus offered the first Mass at the Last Supper when He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. "And taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke; and gave to them, saying: 'This is My Body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me.' In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: 'This is the chalice, the new testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you.'" (Luke 22:19-20)

10. How is the Mass a sacrifice?

It is a sacrifice because it contains all the elements of a true sacrifice: Priest and victim are Jesus Christ, and the destruction consists in the separate consecration of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Catholic theology teaches that, "a Sacrament effects (does) what it signifies (symbolizes)." Jesus Christ died on the Cross from loss of blood; His blood is the price of our Redemption, according to Scripture and Tradition. In the Mass, the separate Consecration - first of the bread into His Body, then of the wine into His Blood - signifies the separation of Christ's body and blood, which was the cause of His death on the Cross. This signified or symbolized separation of His body and blood, therefore effects in the Mass the re-enactment of His death - though in the Mass, it is in an unbloody manner.

11. Is the sacrifice of the Mass the same as the sacrifice of the Cross?

Yes, they are the same in that the victim and the priest are the same, Jesus Christ. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

12. What is the difference between the two sacrifices?

The difference is that the Sacrifice of the Cross was a bloody sacrifice; whereas, the Sacrifice of the Mass is an unbloody one.

13. Did Jesus Christ give anyone the power to offer Mass?

Yes. He gave it to His twelve Apostles when He said, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke 22:19)

14. Did the Apostles say Mass?

Yes, they and their successors said Mass. "We have an altar, whereof they have no power to eat who serve the [Jewish] tabernacle." (Hebrews 13:10)

"And they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42)

15. Are there men today who can offer the Sacrifice of the Mass?

Yes, the power of offering Mass has been handed down during the past two thousand years through the Bishops of the Catholic Church, by the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

16. Who is the principal priest in every Mass?

Jesus Christ is the principal priest; whereas, the human priest stands in the place of Jesus and speaks the words. The priest we see at the altar shares in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

17. At what part of the Mass does the sacrifice itself take place?

At the Consecration, when the priest says, This is My Body." "This is the chalice of My Blood..."

18. How can you offer God the perfect sacrifice?

By uniting yourself with the priest at the altar, such as by reading the Mass prayers in a missal or prayer book.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Catholics have to attend Mass every Sunday and on the six Holy Days of Obligation. To miss Mass deliberately on Sunday or a Holy Day is a mortal sin.

2. The Church urges her members to attend Mass every day, especially during Advent and Lent.

3. The priest may offer Mass for the souls in Purgatory. It is a custom among Catholics to have Masses said for their dead relatives and friends, instead of buying flowers. A "spiritual bouquet" of Masses not only helps the soul of the dead person but gives greater consolation to that person's relatives than flowers do.

4. The priest may also say Mass for the intentions of the living, for example, for a couple on their wedding anniversary, for the intentions of someone on his birthday, to pray for the sick, to ask for other favors, to thank God for favors received.

5. An offering of money, called a stipend, is made to the priest who says the Mass. This is not payment for the Mass but is for the support of the priest.

"Know you not, that they who work in the holy place, eat the things that are of the holy place; and they that serve the altar, partake with the altar? So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel, should live by the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:13-14)