

The
Queen's
Work
Discussion
Club
Series

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The Mass

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

THE MASS

I. THE EXTERNALS OF THE MASS.

A. The Altar.

1. The liturgical history of the altar is very interesting. Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, the article "Altar."

2. Types of altars now in use, fixed and portable. Have a priest take your group to the altar of your church and show you the altar table, the altar stone, and the relics of saints in the cavity of the altar stone.

B. The Tabernacle.

1. Historical origin, earliest forms, modern tabernacles, liturgical requirements. Cf. "The History of the Mass," Rev. John O'Brien.

2. The ornaments of the altar—candles, altar linens, and articles used for the serving of the Mass. Excellent outlines on all these subjects are contained in "Altar and Sanctuary," prepared for discussion-club use by Angela A. Clendenin, and published by The Catholic Action Committee of Women, 307 East Central Avenue, Wichita, Kansas.

C. Altar Vessels.

The chalice and paten, cruets, ciborium, pyx, monstrance. Excellent material on these subjects is found in "The Visible Church," by Most Rev. John F. Sullivan, D.D.

D. Vestments.

The most practical way to learn the names, uses, and history of the vestments used at Mass is to have a priest demonstrate by actually robing himself as he would if he were about to say Mass and explaining chiefly the history and purpose of each vestment as he puts it on. There are numerous books on the externals of the Mass which give brief explanations. Cf. "The Visible Church" (mentioned above under C) and "The Treasure of the Liturgy," by N. Mass, Bruce Publishing Co. Also "Altar and Sanctuary" (mentioned above under B.2).

N.B. If it is impractical or impossible for your group to have an explanation of the sacred vestments in the manner suggested above, illustrations of various types of sacred vessels and vestments can be clipped from old church-goods catalogues, mounted on cardboard, and used for study.

II. THE MASS AS A SACRIFICE.

A. General Notion of Sacrifice.

1. The root meaning of the word sacrifice, *sacrum facere*, means any action by which something sacred is done.

2. In a broad sense sacrifice means any act of religion, internal or external, performed in honor of God.

3. Strictly, sacrifice is the offering of a sensible object by destruction or at least by some change in the object, an offering made to God by a duly authorized person in acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion over us and our complete dependence on him. The moderator or priest director should be prepared to explain the four important elements of this definition, *viz.*:

- a. The offering of a sensible, *i.e.*, a visible object.
- b. The transformation of that object.
- c. A duly authorized person publicly appointed to perform an act of social worship.
- d. The essential purpose of sacrifice.

B. The Universality of Sacrifice in the History of the Human Race.

1. Among the Indians.
2. Among the Romans.
3. Among the Greeks.

Though sacrifice was an integral part of religion in practically every pagan nation and tribe, the above nations are suggested since source material on sacrifice among these nations is easy to obtain. *Cf.* ancient history and United States history textbooks.

C. The Sacrifice of the Old Law.

1. Holocausts, *i.e.*, sacrifices of adoration, bloody and unbloody. *Cf.* Leviticus i, 3-17; vi, 14-18; Numbers viii, 8; xv, 4-10.
2. Salutary sacrifices of thanksgiving, in fulfillment of a vow, or voluntary sacrifices.
3. Expiatory sacrifices, or sacrifices for the remission of sin. These were bloody sacrifices.

Review Bible history or, better still, read the actual Biblical

account of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel; Noah's sacrifice after the Deluge; Abraham's sacrifice; Melchisedech's. In the New Testament read the story of Zachary in the Temple; of the presentation.

4. The sacrifice of the Old Law had, according to St. Thomas, a twofold purpose: "The ceremonies (sacrifices) of the Old Law have a twofold end; one literal, inasmuch as they were intended for the worship of God; the other figurative or mystic, inasmuch as they were intended to prefigure Christ." (*Summa Theol.* lae 2ae q. 102.) They were real sacrifices by which men truly and nobly worshiped God. But they were more: They were figures, types, dim shadows of the sacrifice of Calvary and the cross.

D. The Sacrifice of the Cross.

In the New Law there is but one sacrifice. Apply the definition of sacrifice to the sacrifice on Calvary.

1. The offering of a visible object (victim), Christ Himself.
2. The transformation (on Calvary); the very death of the victim.
3. Performed by a duly authorized priest—Christ, both priest and victim. Cf. Epistle to the Hebrews.
4. The purpose for which the sacrifice was offered.

E. The Mass and Calvary.

The Mass is essentially the same as the sacrifice of the cross. The Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely a commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross; it is essentially the same sacrifice, though differing from it in some ways. In both sacrifices the principal offerer is the same, *viz.*, Jesus Christ; the victim in both sacrifices is the same, so that essentially both sacrifices are the same. The Council of Trent declares, "In the divine Sacrifice of the Mass the same Christ is present, and in a bloodless manner immolated, who upon the altar of the cross did once in blood offer Himself up to God."

Discuss the differences between the Mass and Calvary.

For further study and for material for papers, discussions, etc., cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, the articles "Mass" and "Sacrifice."

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The Church and the Mass, Walsh, S.J. International Catholic Truth Society.

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW:

1. Suggest a better expression for attendance at Mass than "hearing Mass."
2. What is the "Leaflet Missal"?
3. What is the *Missa Recitata*?
4. Explain the terms "Ordinary of the Mass" and "Proper of the Mass."
5. Name the parts of the Ordinary and those of the Proper of the Mass.
6. Explain the difference between a fixed and a portable altar.
7. Why do Protestant churches have no altars?
8. Why are the relics of martyrs entombed in altar stones?
9. What are the essential altar furnishings and decorations?
10. What are the rubrical prescriptions regarding altar cloths?
11. What are the rubrical prescriptions regarding the presence of the crucifix on the altar during Mass?
12. Name the sacred vessels in use at Mass and Benediction and for the conservation of the sacred Hosts.
13. Name the vestments with which the priest robes himself to say Mass.
14. How many of the sacred vessels must be consecrated?
15. What are the rules in regard to the laity touching the sacred vessels?

16. Give the definition of "sacrifice" in the strictest sense.
17. Name the chief forms of sacrifice of the Old Law.
18. Apply the definition of sacrifice to the sacrifice on Calvary.
19. Show that the Mass and Calvary are essentially the same sacrifice.
20. Discuss the difference between the Mass and Calvary.
21. Name the four purposes for which the Mass is offered.
22. Show that priest and people offer the Mass for the four great ends of the Mass. Explain to a non-Catholic the meaning of the expression used by the priest: "my sacrifice and yours."

III. THE FOUR PURPOSES FOR WHICH MASS IS OFFERED

A. Four Obligations Rest Upon Us in Relation to God.

1. Adoration.

As creatures we must recognize God's supreme dominion over us and our complete dependence upon Him. We must acknowledge His infinite perfections, majesty, goodness, power, and love. In other words one of the first obligations of creatures toward God is adoration.

2. Thanksgiving.

Since God has given us all that we possess, and since it is in virtue of His infinite mercy that we exist, and since in His generosity He showers down upon us temporal and spiritual favors, we must manifest our gratitude. Hence every creature has the obligation of offering to God thanksgiving.

3. Expiation.

All creatures, with the sole exception of the Blessed Mother, are sinners. Creatures are born with the stain of original sin on the soul and have in addition to this the guilt of actual sins. We must atone for all these sins. We must beg pardon for them and expiate them. Hence the creatures' obligation of expiation.

4. Petition.

Inasmuch as we can do nothing of ourselves and stand in constant need of God's help both for soul and body, we must con-

tinually beg God to fill all our deficiencies and needs. Hence the obligation of petition.

B. Mere Creature.

No mere creature can satisfy these above-mentioned obligations adequately. For man is but a finite creature, and the sum total of adoration, thanksgiving, propitiation, and petition offered to God by all men of all times would of itself still remain finite and almost insignificant as an offering to an infinite God.

C. Christ.

However, Christ as God and man offered a sacrifice to God in the name of all mankind, a sacrifice which was of infinite value because it was offered by the God-Man. This was the sacrifice of Calvary.

D. The One Sacrifice.

From the previous division, where it is shown that the Mass and Calvary are substantially the same sacrifice, it follows that the Mass is the one sacrifice that can be offered to Almighty God to satisfy adequately the obligations of adoring Him, thanking Him, propitiating Him, and petitioning Him.

E. The Only Church.

Though the obligation of offering God adequate praise, thanksgiving, propitiation, and petition is incumbent upon all men, the Catholic Church alone has the true sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

F. Priest and People Together.

The Mass is not the sacrifice of the priest alone, but of the priest and the people together.

1. The priest says, "*Meum et vestrum sacrificium,*" my sacrifice and yours.

2. The prayers that the priest says are always phrased in the plural: *Oremus; Orate, fratres,* etc.

3. The priest may not, without special permission and special need, say Mass alone or without a server.

4. The acolyte represents the congregation and speaks in their name. Originally the prayers of the priest were answered by the people directly.

5. In the early days of the Church the people came up at the offertory to present the priest with the bread and wine that he was later to consecrate.

G. The Four Great Ends of the Mass.

Hence priest and people, united, offer to God the Mass, the sacrifice of the New Law. Christ is the great High Priest of every Mass; priest and people offer the Mass with Him for the four great ends of the Mass.

1. To honor and praise God, who is king of the universe, Father of us all, our creator, and eventually our judge.

2. To thank Him for His benefits of creation, preservation, adoption, redemption, sanctification, and for His special gifts to the individuals and groups in the community.

3. To beg His forgiveness for the sins of the human race so that the world may not be destroyed because of human sin and that individuals may win pardon.

4. To win new graces for the whole human race, both for those living on earth and for those in purgatory.

CONCLUSION

A. Catholics, when they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, should take pains to have an actual intention of offering the Mass for these four ends of the Mass.

B. The Mass has infinite value in itself; its particular efficacy for the individual depends upon the degree of cooperation of the individual. In other words the more completely the individual is united with Christ in offering the Mass, the more graces and blessings will he receive from the Mass.

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