

independent account which Paul had from tradition is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23- 26.

From these texts we learn, first of all, that Christ has identified the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion, His body and blood, with the fact of His sacrifice--"This is my covenant- blood, which is about to be shed for the sake of many, with a view to forgiveness of sins.... This is my body which is given up for you." Further, Christ commanded that this act should continue, the same act which He performed at the Last Supper: "Do this as my memorial" (Luke 22:19). "Do this ... in remembrance of me.... Every time you eat this bread and drink the chalice of the Lord, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:25f.).

The rite whereby the body and blood of Christ are made available to men, therefore, is a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ. Those who offer this memorial rite are the priests of the Church, the successors of the Apostles to whom Christ gave the command "Do this." Because of the union of this rite with Christ's sacrifice, the rite itself is a sacrifice--not through the efficacy of human offering, but in virtue of the sacrifice which it memorializes. Christ is the principal priest Who offers this sacrifice, the human priest is His minister.

The Mass--Sacrifice of the Cross

The Mass is thus the same as the sacrifice of the cross. No matter how many times it is offered, nor in how many places at one time, it is the same sacrifice of Christ. Christ is forever offering Himself in the Mass.

What Christ effected through His sacrifice on the cross, He effected for all time. He suffers no more. The sacrifice continues, of course, only in its effects. That is what the Epistle to the Hebrews means in speaking of Christ's eternal sacrifice in heaven. And this is precisely what the Mass is for--to continue the effects of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. The souls of men yet unborn, together with those now living and those who have come into existence since Christ's sacrifice, all have need of the salvation which Christ has won for us. It is through the Mass as well as through the sacraments that the effects of Christ's salvation are applied to the souls of such men. In this

sense, the redemption is still going on, and will go on as long as a single soul remains to be saved. In this sense the sacrifice of Christ is still being enacted and will continue to be enacted.

From what has been said, it should be easy to see why the Mass holds such an important place in the Church's life, why we build churches and why, when we have no church building, we are anxious to get some place available for the celebration of Mass. It explains the importance we attach to the priesthood, the extraordinary emphasis which we place on Mass as a Sunday observance, why Catholics are obliged to assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass on certain days.

The Mass is the very essence of the Church. Within it the Church's life, and the Church's very existence, is centered. If there were no Mass, there could be no Catholic Church. The Mass is our act of worship, an act which we know to be worship really worthy of God, because it is the sacrifice of God's own Son. It is not just the feeble offering of our hands, but an act which we know does God supreme honor.

What the sacrifices of the Old Law were unable to accomplish--what no other form of human worship can accomplish--the Mass performs. God is adored adequately, God is thanked adequately. God is petitioned irresistibly for those things which His children need. Perfect atonement is made for sin. All these effects follow from the fact that Christ's sacrifice was perfect.

Those who gather every Sunday morning, are fulfilling the most important duty of an intelligent being, namely, giving glory and honor and worship to the One Who has all things in His Holy Hands - Almighty God. Invite your loved ones, friends, co-workers and acquaintances to true worship at your local Catholic Church.

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Pamphlet 365

What is True Worship?

Worship, or paying attention to God, is one of the things that belong to God. "Render to God the things that are God's," commands Christ in the gospel. God expects and demands from every thinking person some attention, some recognition, some thought, some prayer, some honor, some homage. Are we acknowledging God, outside of an occasional sentimental singing of "God Bless America"? Thank the Lord for faithful people who come to church every Sunday morning, to pay some attention to Him. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass Catholics give perfect worship to the Almighty.

In the fifth century before Christ, the prophet Malachi was condemning the unworthy sacrifices that were being offered to God by the Jerusalem priesthood. Speaking in the name of God, he said:

"I have no pleasure in you," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will not receive a gift from your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles," says the Lord of hosts (1:10-11).

Christian tradition has seen in Malachi's words a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of the New Law, which we call in English, the Mass. And in truth the Mass is a sacrifice offered "in every place," from the West to the East. It is the sacrifice of Christ Himself, continued down through the ages in His Church.

Sacrifice is of the very essence of religion. "Religion" is derived from a Latin word meaning "to bind back," that is, to bind the creature back, to unite him with the Creator. And it is only through sacrifice that this union with the Creator can be perfectly acquired. It was through sacrifice that Christ Himself was able to achieve this for man. It is only through the perpetuation of that sacrifice that this union may be maintained.

Sacrifice is an offering to God to acknowledge His supreme power to put the worshiper in union with Him. In its simplest form, a sacrifice might be considered a "gift" to God, although man cannot really give anything to the Giver of all. It is better described, perhaps, as a gesture indicating the spirit

of good will and self-denial on the part of the one who makes the sacrifice. Even the most primitive peoples, whose religion may be very crude and overladen with superstition generally are actuated by a spirit of sacrifice and the intention of pleasing God.

The Jews had many such sacrifices. In some respects, the Jewish sacrifices were materially the same kind as those of the Gentiles. But the Jews, because of their understanding of God through God's own revelation, could offer the sacrifices with assurance that they were pleasing to God, and they knew from their Law how these sacrifices were to be offered.

Sacrifices of the Jews

The Jews had various kinds of sacrifices, each offered for specific purposes. One was called the "holocaust," or "whole burnt-offering." In this sacrifice, an animal victim was entirely destroyed, or in the case of the poor who could not offer such costly sacrifices, cakes or incense were burnt as a sign of the wish of the sacrificer to honor God's majesty.

Other sacrifices were called "sin-offerings" or "guilt-offerings," and were especially intended to remove sin. A final type of sacrifice was called by the Jews the "peace-offering." In Hebrew the word "peace" means much more than it ordinarily does in our languages. It signifies "completeness," "harmony." Peace with God meant union with God, and that is especially what this sacrifice was intended to symbolize. Therefore an important part of this rite lay in the sacrificial meal which followed the sacrifice.

The choice parts of the victim having been burnt in God's honor, the remainder of the sacrifice, now considered sacred because it had been dedicated to God, was eaten by the one who made the sacrifice and his friends. This type of sacrifice was an occasion in which a wealthy person would have opportunity to share his possessions with the poor by inviting them to partake of the sacrifice with him. The eating of the sacrificial victim was a dim foreshadowing of the Holy Eucharist of the Mass.

In the peace-offering there was communion-- communion of God with man, communion among

men under God. In the Mass there is this same Communion, in a far more exalted way. What makes the Mass the most exalted of all sacrifices is the nature of the Victim, Christ Himself. For the Mass is the continuation of Christ's sacrifice which He offered through His life and death.

Christ's work upon earth, and especially His suffering and death, were a sacrifice by which we have been united with God through Christ our Mediator. The Epistle to the Hebrews says of Christ:

"Since then we have a great high priest, who has penetrated the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to the faith we profess.... Let us, therefore, confidently draw near to God's throne, the source of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to aid us when we need it" (5:14, 16).

Jesus, then, is the priest, the offerer of the sacrifice. This was by divine appointment, the epistle goes on to say:

"Christ did not seek for himself he glory of becoming the High Priest, but God said to him: 'You are my Son; today have I become your Father.' So too he says in another place, 'You are a priest forever after the manner of Melchisedech'" (5:5f.).

But Christ was not only the priest of this sacrifice, He was also the Victim, the very object itself of the sacrifice:

"Jesus, when he had a mortal body, offered prayers and supplications with piercing cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent piety. Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and after he had been raised to the heights of perfection, he became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation, since God had proclaimed him a high priest after the manner of Melchisedech" (5:7- 10).

An Everlasting Sacrifice

The epistle goes on to say that this sacrifice of Christ's is everlasting:

"In the case of Jesus there intervened the oath of him who said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever."' . . . He, because he continues forever, has an imperishable priesthood. Consequently he is able at

all times to save those that come to God through him, living always, as he does, to make intercession on their behalf" (7:21f., 24f.).

It is not that Christ offers any more sacrifices, but that He continues the same sacrifice. "He has no need of offering sacrifice day by day, as do the other high priests, first for their own and then for the people's sins. He did this once for all, when he offered himself" (7:26f.).

This sacrifice Christ continues to offer in heaven. "He has taken his seat at the right hand of the divine Majesty's throne in heaven. There in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle, which the Lord, and not man, has erected, he carries on priestly functions. To this every high priest is appointed--to offer gift and sacrifices" (8:1 ff.).

This eternal sacrifice which Christ continually offers in heaven to the Father, is our salvation. "It was not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood that was the means of his entering the Holy Place and securing eternal redemption" (9:12). "This is why he is the mediator of a new covenant and died for redemption from the transgressions committed under the former covenant, in order that those who have been called may receive the eternal inheritance which has been promised" (9:15).

You may agree with the New Testament testimony concerning Christ's sacrifice for our salvation, but still want to ask--"But where does the Mass fit into the picture?"

Where does the Mass fit into the picture?

The Gospels provide a clear answer. We read there that on the night in which He was betrayed, in which His suffering was to begin, "Before supper was over, Jesus took bread into his hands and, after saying grace, broke it into portions, which he gave to the disciples with the words: 'Take! Eat! This is my body.' He also took a cup and, after saying grace, passed it on to them with the words: 'Drink of it, every one of you, for this is my covenant-blood, which is about to be shed for the sake of many, with a view to forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26ff.). The other two Gospels which record this great event do not differ greatly; see Mark 14:22ff., Luke 22:19f. An