

Family Faith Formation: The Sacrifice of the Mass

- What is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?
 - The Mass is a memorial of the Lord's Sacrifice of Self at the Last Supper, which is the same Sacrifice of Self on the Cross on Calvary
 - But more than simply a *memorial*, more than simply *reminding* us of what Christ had done us and for our salvation, it is also a celebration here and now in the liturgical ministry of ordained priests of what Christ *still* is doing until the end of time
 - In short, the Mass is not *another* sacrifice but *the* Sacrifice, made present in the here-and-now despite the distances of geography and the passage of time, so that we too may participate worthily in what Christ has won for us
 - The Church not only remembers Jesus Christ but actually, truly, brings Him – His saving death and glorious resurrection – into the here-and-now, so that His people might become part of the action, as it were
 - The Church can do this because Christ and His Church are as head and body; they are as Bridegroom and Bride, forever one in the Holy Spirit
 - Christ is there – the Word of God in the Scripture proclaimed; the Body of Christ in the Sacrament received, the Eucharist
 - Christ is there – the ministry of the priest, the *alter Christus*, who offers the Sacrifice of the Mass *in persona Christi*
 - Christ is there – all of us gathered in His Name, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church
- What is the liturgy?
 - The liturgy is the *public* worship of God
 - Therefore, it is *common* worship, and to be truly welcoming so that all may worship God together, it must be *consistent* worship
 - A liturgy where the celebrant “bebops and skats” all over the place, while regarded by some as “refreshing” or whatever, in fact is a disservice, for it erodes the consistency of liturgical worship and therefore erodes ability to worship in common
 - If people might criticize me, therefore, for being a stickler for the liturgy in my constant concern that the liturgy is prayed and performed as well as can be, that is because I whole-heartedly believe in my role of stewardship where the liturgy is concerned, that I may safeguard what the Church has entrusted to me for the sake and the salvation of the people of God
 - And it is not my place to invent new and exciting ways of going about liturgy where the liturgy already is carefully and prayerfully prescribed
- What is the most important form of all Christian liturgy?
 - The Mass
 - But...*why* the Mass?
 - Again, the Mass commemorates, celebrates, and makes present the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, which is the Sacrifice that won our salvation
 - Also, the Lord Himself commanded us: “Do this in memory of Me.”
 - And the centerpiece of the Mass is the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is Jesus Himself, God-made-man now present to us in the bread-made-God; where the other Sacraments effect God's grace in particular ways, the Eucharist is

where God's very life, God's very self, is effected, made present, and really, truly given to us physically, substantially, truly

- What are the two principle parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?
 - There are *four* main stages, as it were, of the Mass liturgy
 - Introductory rites
 - Sign of the Cross (which is the precise moment when Mass begins)
 - Greeting
 - Penitential rite
 - *Gloria*
 - Collect
 - Liturgy of the Word
 - Scripture readings
 - Homily
 - Creed
 - General Intercessions
 - Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Preparation of the altar
 - Prayer over the gifts
 - Preface dialogue
 - Eucharistic prayer and words of institution (the consecration)
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - Sign of Peace
 - *Agnus Dei*
 - Holy Communion
 - Concluding rites
 - Prayer after Communion
 - Solemn blessing
 - Dismissal
 - The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are the two principle parts
- Why is the Holy Mass offered?
 - Think of the four broad categories of prayer: praise/adoration; thanksgiving; petition; contrition
 - The Mass is the form of Christian worship that perfectly engages all four categories of prayer
 - Praise/adoration: Collect; Preface; Eucharistic Prayer
 - Thanksgiving: Eucharistic Prayer; the Eucharist ("thanksgiving")
 - Petition: Collect; Prayer over the gifts; Prayer after Communion; Eucharist Prayer
 - Contrition: penitential rite; the final words prayed on common just before Holy Communion ("Lord, I am not worthy....")
- How do the people of God participate in the Mass?
 - In other words: what do we mean by "active participation" in the Mass?
 - The dialogue-like structure of the prayers throughout Mass
 - The Preface dialogue

- Certain parts of the Mass that is proper *only* for the people to say/pray, not for the priest to say/pray, either alone or with the people (e.g. the Memorial Acclamation; the Great Amen)
 - Hymns, the Responsorial, and other singing
 - Worthy reception of the Lord in the Eucharist
 - What do I mean by constantly referring to “worthy reception” or receiving the Eucharist “worthily and well”?
 - A Catholic
 - A Catholic in good standing
 - Not excommunicated
 - Not taking a public stance on something that goes against Church teaching
 - Not conscious of mortal sins needing to be confessed
 - What can you do if you cannot worthily receive?
- Prayerful participation even before Mass begins also constitutes and aids “active participation”
 - Praying with and/or studying the Scripture passages for the Mass
 - Going to confession as needed
 - Arriving for Mass not *as* Mass begins or *after* Mass begins but *before* Mass begins so as to pray and thus prepare, to be removed from the distractions and busy-ness of the world and thus to focus oneself on the sacred liturgy about to commence
 - And come to Mass with a particular intention
 - The Mass intentions listed in the bulletin are the specific intentions for which the priest offers that Mass
 - But *each* of us can offer our engagement in the Mass for a particular intention (e.g. if someone asks us to pray for them, we can offer the Mass for them as a prayer)