

B What is the Mass?

(This meditation, read on Saturday, is a presentation of the Mass in general. We will reserve the meditation on the reasons for the attachment to the traditional Mass for the following day, Sunday.)

Dear pilgrim friends, let's talk about the Mass! Why is this so important?

- First, it is the **Summit** of worship, where the Church gives back to God what is due to it, its "vertical" activity between Heaven and earth.
- But it is also the **Source** of all the life of the Church, and in particular of the Church's evangelical mission. Each Mass offered is a treasure of graces communicated and poured out, for the good of each, in the communion of saints. With this, we will be able to shine forth, to be missionaries who make Jesus Christ known, as the Saviour of men and the true source of their happiness.
- It is also the **only place** where God gives himself as food for us and truly makes himself present. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is welcoming him into us humanly and spiritually to better live with his presence.
- The Mass is also the place of our **Salvation**. Since it is the renewal of the sacrifice of Jesus. Indeed, "Every time this sacrifice is offered, the work of our redemption is accomplished!"

Finally, the Mass is repeated... every day! Repetition is necessary. We breathe every moment, it is a vital, necessary act; we cannot live without it. Likewise, each Mass is a breath of fresh air for the Church and the world of souls. It's vital, every time. Hence the multiplication of Masses, the number and frequency of Masses in the Church and in our lives. But repetition can lead to habit and contempt: it is a danger that awaits us. But we do not *attend* Mass (like an accident, a spectacle, a scene of ordinary life, etc.). We participate in it. It's strong; we take part in it.

So let's rediscover this treasure!

What is the Mass?

We have a precise, complete, and sure account of the Mass. This is the dogma of the Church. Here are the main assertions:

- The Eucharist renews the total offering of Christ on Calvary, to apply its graces and merits to us. It's a sacrifice. The Mass is the bloodless renewal of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.
- The Eucharist is also a sacrament which contains the Lord Jesus. He is there, whole, alive and glorious. He is there with his Body, his Blood, his Soul and his Divinity. He is there under the appearance of bread and wine. This is the Real Presence.
- This presence is obtained by the change of the substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord, at the consecration. This admirable change is called transubstantiation.
- Our Lord makes himself present to be adored, to remain near us, and to be received as spiritual food. This is Eucharistic communion.
- Christ instituted the Eucharist and entrusted it to the Church. "*Do this in memory of Me,*" he orders the Apostles, the first priests! It is the function and the particular power of the priest to celebrate Mass. Such is the ministerial priesthood, received through the sacrament of Order.

This is in fact what the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: 'At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet "in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'" (§1323)

The Mass is a sacrifice

I now suggest that we deepen our understanding of one of the most important points of the Mass: it is truly and properly a sacrifice (cf Council of Trent).

Sacrifice comes from *sacrum-facere*: it is to make sacred. To make sacred, that is, to move something from the domain of men to the domain of God. To better understand this, we can ask ourselves what is the place of sacrifice in our relationship with God.

God is infinite, transcendent, adorable. Creator and Master of all things. To recognize and express the greatness of God and our total dependence on Him, there is... adoration. This adoration is exercised in actions... and the best (the strongest) is sacrifice: the offering to God of a reality to express our perfect homage, and our total dependence, and this even before the drama of sin ! Offering a sacrifice to God is a duty: a duty of religion (which connects us to God).

Now for a sacrifice to be perfect, it must achieve its goal, it must reach its recipient, it must please God. It is divine pleasure.

But after original sin, man can no longer offer of himself, alone, a sacrifice that pleases God, because he is now a sinner.

And yet... man is still bound to this towards God. It is even his highest destiny: to be a worshiper of God. What is at stake is the Glory of God... It is therefore also the salvation of man!

The solution will come from God himself, and from his Son. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is the only perfect sacrifice, fully accepted by God. And this because of the infinite charity of the one who offers it: Christ, true God and true Man. This sacrifice honours God, destroys sin, and re-establishes communion between God and the one who offers it.

It is therefore by uniting our small sacrifice to the immense sacrifice of Christ that our worship is received and pleasing to God: in a word, it is by offering ourselves, personally, with the Sacrifice of Jesus that we will be saved. And this, this union of our offering and that of Christ, is done... at Mass. As we say in the offertory prayer: "Pray brethren that **my** sacrifice which is also **yours** may be **acceptable**, to God the Almighty Father! - May the Lord receive this sacrifice (that of Christ), from your hands for the praise and glory of his Name, for our benefit and that of his entire holy Church."

The Mass is the bloodless renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross.

"The bloodless sacrifice of the Mass conveys to us the bloody sacrifice of the Cross. »

Comparing the Cross and the Mass:

- It is the same victim, Christ offering himself to God his Father with his Body, his Blood, his Soul and his Divinity, in an act of divine-human love.
- It is the same priest, Jesus, Sovereign Principal Priest, who offers himself on the cross and on the altar.
- These are the same goals, the 4 purposes of sacrifice:
 - o 1. adore;
 - o 2. thank;
 - o 3. ask for forgiveness;
 - o 4. obtain graces.

On the other hand:

- The way of offering is different: On the Cross, Jesus offers himself in a bloody and painful way, physically, visibly. At Mass, Jesus offers himself bloodlessly, sacramentally and invisibly. He no longer suffers, no longer dies.
- Likewise, the sacrifice of Christ is unique, while the Mass is repeated and multiplied: numerous priests, times, places, altars.
- Finally, on the Cross, Jesus deserves, obtains the salvation of the world, while on the altar, Jesus no longer deserves: he communicates the infinite benefits of his sacrifice to the Church and to souls.

Friends of God and the Mass

"If you want to plough your furrow straight, hang your plough on a star," says a famous saying.

Look, listen, imitate the saints, in their love of the Mass!

The Vendée priests under the Terror celebrating Mass clandestinely...

Saint Dominic Savio as a child, waiting every morning in the cold for the opening of the church and the day's Mass...

Vietnamese Christians, walking three nights in territory monitored by communist police, to attend Easter Mass...

Cardinal Mindszenty, confessor of the faith under the Soviet regime, celebrating a single Mass in his prison in Hungary...

Our Christian brothers risk death every time they attend Mass in Nigeria, Egypt, Syria...
And so many others throughout the centuries!

The holy curé d'Ars said: "All good works put together do not equal the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men, and the Holy Mass is the work of God."

Jesus told us: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Let us thank God and the Church for this gift of inestimable value. Being attached to the Mass should not encourage us to keep this treasure for ourselves but to make it known and pass it on. "He who has received more will be asked for more." And all wealth creates responsibility!

So: live "in a state of Mass." That's the issue! Know the Mass better, to love it better, live it and introduce others to it. Yes, then be good and true connoisseurs of the Mass, lovers, living people of the Mass... and you will be good transmitters, whenever the opportunity presents itself.

that's an ambitious program! So let's each do a little spiritual technical check...

Quiz on the Mass in my Life

- What are my priorities: what place do I put the Mass in my life?
- Organization: is it more like "I plan my Sunday around the Mass; or I fit Mass in wherever I can in my Sundays?..."
- How regularly do I go to Mass? (Sundays and holidays, weekdays when possible...) What priority may be given to other activities? Is weekday Mass an eccentricity and a pious excess for us? Or is it a good inspiration and recommendation from the Church, which I willingly practice and for which I create the opportunity in my schedule when I can?
- What is the quality of my participation: meditation, liturgical service according to my rank and my skills (server, choir, material preparation, etc.) – or "in a rush", at the back of the church, in a half-sleep ?
- Punctuality: am I (often, usually) late for this appointment? Or do I arrive in time to pray and be recollected for the start of Mass?
- Is the missal a guide for me, or just a book in my library?
- What have I read and studied about the Mass (Catechism of the Catholic Church, conferences, good books, etc.)?