

Discovering The Riches of The Mass

Introduction Talk Notes

T1. Do You Ever Wish Could “Get More” Out of the Mass

I am so excited to explore with all you something that is so central to our lives as Catholics, but something that is not always very well understood – and that is The Mass – the central act of worship in our Faith.

- A.** We will be looking at how all of the Prayers, the Rituals, and the Signs of The Mass are all rooted in Scripture. If we as Catholics understand the Biblical background of The Mass better, we will be able to give of ourselves more fully to Jesus at every Mass.

There is something deeper going on in the Liturgy that we are going to be exploring in our various sessions together.

- B.** If you really take a look at the Prayers we say at every Mass, the Words, the Signs, the Rituals – they are so rooted in Sacred Scripture. It is beautiful! One of the things that we’ll find that as Catholics we go to Mass, Sunday after Sunday, sometimes we say these Words just out of routine, sometimes we perform these Rituals just out of habit.
1. Do we really understand what they mean, do we understand their great significance. If we could see that all these Prayers and Rituals were rooted in Scripture, and understand that Biblical background better, we will understand what we are saying and doing every time we go to Mass.
 2. Then, we will be able to give of ourselves more to our Lord at every Mass, and receive all the great Spiritual Treasures He has for us in the Liturgy.
 3. Catholics often say - I just wish I could get more out of Mass. If we really understood, what was happening in The Mass, we would not make that statement, instead – we might ask ourselves – how, can I give myself more to Jesus at every Mass? And in giving ourselves more to Him, we will encounter Him and encounter the graces there in The Mass.

T2. Outline of this Study

- A.** Four main parts where will go through all the Prayers and Rituals of The Mass and look at their Biblical Roots. Four Main parts of The Mass:
1. Introductory Rites
 2. Liturgy of the Word
 3. Liturgy of the Eucharist
 4. Concluding Rites
- B.** From the Opening Sign of the Cross to the Concluding – Thanks Be to God, we are going to be exploring many of the different parts of the Mass in light of their Scriptural foundations.
- C.** Basics of the Mass – laying the foundations for our journey together.

Asking Mary’s intercession for us for this study. Mary was someone in the Bible who was described as a person that kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She was watching the amazing events unfolding before her, at the dawn of the Messianic age as the Son of God was conceived in her womb, as she gave birth to the Son, as she saw the Shepherds coming to honor and pay homage to her Son.

She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Let us ask her to intercede for us, so that we can keep all these things of The Mass, deep within our hearts, so they can bear much fruit in our own lives. Hail Mary ...

T3.Key aspects of the Mass

A. What is The Mass?

The Mass is the celebration of the Eucharist that Jesus instituted at the Last Supper. Christians have been celebrating The Mass for 2000 years now. There are three key aspects of the Mass:

1. The Mass is Sacrifice
2. The Mass as Real Presence
3. The Mass as Holy Communion

T4.The Mass as Sacrifice (Catechism # 1365-1368)

A. What do we mean when we describe the Eucharist – The Mass as a Sacrifice?

B. The Eucharist is the redeeming Sacrifice of Jesus Christ made present Sacramentally for us, so its power may be more fully applied to our lives.

1. **1365** Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." In the Eucharist, Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

2. **1366** The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit:

[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.

3. **1367** The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner . . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."

4. **1368** The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.

T5.The Mass (Eucharist) as Real Presence and as Holy Communion.

A. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus is present to His people in many different ways:

1. Jesus is Present to us in Prayer. In Gospel of Matthew: He is present when two or more are gathered in His name.
2. Jesus is Present to us in a particular way in the Poor.

3. Jesus is Present to us in the Holy Words of Sacred Scripture.
4. Jesus is Especially Present to us in the Sacraments.
5. Jesus is Uniquely Present to us in the Holy Eucharist. CCC 1373-74
 - a) **1373** "Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church: in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in my name," in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But "he is present . . . most especially in the Eucharistic species."
 - b) **1374** The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."
 - c) Jesus is Uniquely Present in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Jesus' very Body and Blood. Jesus is Present – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist.

B. Meaning of "Real Presence"

1. What does this really mean though, for when we show up at Mass we see the Priest hold up the Host or come up for Holy Communion. This Sacred Host looks like bread, and when you actually receive the Eucharist, it tastes like bread.
2. If you were to touch it – it feels like bread. It smells like bread. It has all of the sensible appearances of bread. And it has all the sensible appearances of wine.
3. So in what sense do we really mean as Catholics when we say that the Eucharist is really Jesus. What do we mean by this?
4. At the Words of Consecration by the Priest – when the Priest takes the bread and takes the wine, and repeats those Sacred Words of Jesus at the Last Supper – This is My Body, This is My Blood, - The bread and wine are really changed to the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.
 - a) This is not a chemical change. It is not as if you would take the Consecrated Host and take it to a laboratory and put it under a microscope, you would not notice a chemical change. It would still look like bread, and the Sacred Species in the Cup would still look like wine. You would not look in the microscope and see Jesus cells floating around.
 - b) It still looks, feels, taste and smells like bread and wine, and yet the Catholic Church teaches that underneath all those outward sensible appearances of bread and wine, Christ's Body and Blood is really Present.
5. The Eucharist is not just a symbol of Jesus, it is not just a reminder of Jesus, but it is the very Presence of Jesus Christ Himself, under the appearances of bread and wine.
6. When we receive Holy Communion, we really partake in Jesus' very Body and Blood under these Sacramental Signs.

T6. The Mass as Sacrifice: Old Testament Background

- A.** In the OT you will find the Jews sacrifice animals, but for most of those sacrifices, the ritual does not end there. They sacrifice the animal and then they partake of the animal in a Communion Meal. Moreover, it is that actual partaking of the animal in the Communion Meal that seals Covenant Union.

Notice those three aspects of Sacrifice:

1. Sacrifice of the animal
 2. Communion Meal
 3. Covenant Union
- B.** In the OT for most of the sacrifices, we see the people will take the animal and offer it up. But offering it up is not the goal that God has in mind. God does not simply want animal blood – animal guts. He does not get a kick out of just seeing animals cut-up that is not what God is interested in. God is interested in Covenant Communion that is what He ultimately wants.
- C.** While the Jews would often offer have these animal be sacrificed, it wasn't enough to sacrifice the animal in most of the sacrifices, particularly for the sacrifice of Passover. You did not just sacrifice the animal, you had to eat of the animal.
- D.** Examples from OT of the Symbolism of Eating. For the Jews, when they would partake of an animal after it was sacrificed, it symbolized Shared Union – Covenant Bonds being forged.
1. Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26)
 - a) Great story in the Book of Genesis. Two men were having a feud; one man is Isaac, Abraham son, and the other man Abimelech. They get together and make a peace treaty. In this Peace Treaty – Covenant Treaty they sacrifice some animals. Then they go to the second step to share of that animal to eat of that animal together.
 - b) Isaac is sitting down with Abimelech and they are eating of the same animal. That has powerful symbolism for the ancient Israelites; because the same food that is going into Abimelech is now going into Isaac.
 2. Symbolism of sacrificial meal: shared life
 - a) That shared food symbolizes shared life – Covenant Bonds. And these Covenant Bonds are so profound that these two men who once were enemies, leave that table not just as friends, not just people in peace, but they call each other brothers. They become part of the same Covenant Family.
 - b) It wasn't enough just to sacrifice the animals, they partook of the animals together and it symbolized shared life; and that's what sealed the Covenant Bonds.
 3. Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24)
 - a) You see this with Israel in the Book of Exodus: After the fleeing from Egypt the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai and it there they are going to be established as God's Covenant People - a Kingdom of Priests, a Chosen People, a Holy Nation. The Covenant Ritual involves some ritual words, where the Law is proclaimed, and the people say they will obey the Law. Then God has the people sacrifice the animals, but it was not enough for the animals to be sacrificed, they have to have a Communion Meal.

- b) After the animals are sacrificed, Moses, Aaron, and many of the Leaders of Israel go higher up on Mount Sinai and eat of the animals under God's Presence. God's Presence coming down on the mountain appearing in the form of a cloud – manifesting His Presence that way. Moses and the Leaders of Israel is eating this meal underneath God's Presence. This Ritual at Mount Sinai, Exodus 24, symbolizes the Covenant Union that's been forged between the people of Israel and God – they are sharing a meal together symbolically – now we see Covenant Union between God and His people of Israel.

4. Passover

- a) If this is the common practice: Sacrifice, Communion Meal, and that's what forges Covenant Union – when we turn to the climatic Sacrifice in the New Testament, the Sacrifice of Jesus of Christ, we should expect that there wasn't just a Sacrifice on The Cross, but that Sacrifice would forge our Covenant Union with God through a Communion Meal.
- b) That is just what we would expect if we followed the Biblical pattern of Sacrifice, Communion Meal, Covenant Union. And that three-fold pattern is especially important for that Great Feast of Passover. At Passover, the Jews would take a Lamb, have it sacrificed, and then they would partake of that Lamb, and that's what renewed their Covenant Union with God.

T7. Jesus fulfills the Passover sacrifice

A. At the Last Supper, the night before Jesus dies. Jesus in the context of the Passover Feast takes Bread and Wine and He says, "This is My Body which is offered up for you, this is My Blood which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

- 1. He uses language, which that was commonly used in the Temple Sacrifices, speaking of the body of the animal being offered up and the blood animal being poured out.

- 2. Last Supper: Old Testament sacrificial language applied to Himself

Except Jesus is taking that sacrificial language and applying not to the body and blood of some lamb out there, but to His very own Body and Blood. In another words, Jesus is identifying Himself as the Passover Lamb.

- 3. And if He is the Passover Lamb that is being sacrificed, His Body and Blood being offered up and poured out. We would expect then that there would be a Passover Meal – that there would be a Communion Meal associated with that. And it would be that Meal that forges the Union that God wants us to have with Him.

B. The Passover sacrifice is followed by a meal

- 1. That is exactly what we find in 1st Cor. 5:7-8: you will see this pattern of Sacrifice – Communion Meal:

"Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

- 2. This pattern is important because it reflects this basic Biblical understanding. No ancient Jew would think of eating just a symbol of the Passover Lamb. They would never eat a symbolic reminder of the lamb - like a lamb shape cookie or lamb shape matzo They would have to sacrifice the animal and then eat of that animal.

3. St. Paul reflects that understanding in 1st Cor. 5:7-8 - For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast. Notice Paul does not say that Christ died so we are now all saved. No Paul says "For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the great feast." What is that Great Feast?
 - a) In 1st Cor. Chapters 10 and 11 – that Great Feast is the Eucharistic Feast – The Communion with Christ's Body and Blood. Paul is reflecting this understanding that the Lamb was sacrificed (Jesus) and we have to partake of the Lamb.
 - b) This sheds a lot of light on Jesus as Real Presence and Holy Communion. As Catholics if we see with Biblical lens that Jesus is the Passover Lamb and He was Sacrificed, we would expect then that we would have to partake of the Real Lamb Himself. Not just a symbol of the lamb, not just a reminder of the lamb, but the Lamb Himself.

T8.Eucharist as Real Presence and Holy Communion

- A. That Lamb is made Present for us in the Holy Eucharist. It is that Communion Meal that establishes that profound deep Union that we are called to have with God, and we renew and continue to deepen that Union with Him every time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.
- B. The importance of the Real Presence: John 6
 1. John Chapter 6: Jesus performs His greatest miracle to date – He multiplies the loaves and the fishes and all the people are excited and want to carry Him off and make Him a King. Jesus is at the highest point in His public ministry, but later on in that Chapter, Jesus says something that makes His public approval ratings just plummet. He starts talking about something that gets the people all upset. And some of His own disciples will leave Him over this – and what does He start talking about: It's the Eucharist.
 2. He starts talking about what we understand now to be the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In John 6:35 Jesus says I am the Bread of Life. That causes a lot of controversy – the Jews starting stirring in verse 41 saying How can He be the Bread of Life – what does this mean? Jesus responds John 6:47-51:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."
 3. The Jews are just appalled at this – John 6:52 they say, "How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?"
 - a) Jesus does not soften His language. He does not say oh, you misunderstood, I am just speaking metaphorically, I am just speaking figuratively. His language gets more graphic, more intense:
 - b) John 6:53-56: "Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."

4. Up to John 54, Jesus used a word for eating that could just mean eating a meal or figuratively like nourishing your mind. After verse John 54 Jesus uses a word in Greek that literally means to chew, to gnaw not a word that in this context could be used in figurative sense. Jesus is clearly talking about really eating His Body, drinking His Blood in some profound real sense.
5. Some of His own disciples will abandon Him on this teaching. He does not go chase them down on and say hey you misunderstood. It is very clear that Jesus taught that we are to partake in His very Body and Blood. That is what we do in Mass when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

C. The Gift of the Eucharist “You are a Tabernacle”

1. Let us think about what a great gift this is that we receive our Lord, the Real Presence of Jesus in every Holy Communion.

Story of Priest in Spain in a small village where he had daily Mass. There was a woman who after Holy Communion would just walk out the door and leave. One day the Priest wanted to teach that woman a lesson of a profound spiritual catechetical moment for her. He had two altar boys who would be holding lit candles as he distributed Holy Communion. On this day, he told the altar boys to do something.

The woman receives Holy Communion and then she walks out and then she notices the two altar boys following her. She is walking out of the Church and walking through the town and the altar boys are still following her. She finally comes back into the Church and says – Hey Father, what is going on here. Tell them to stop. Father said, don’t you realize that you are a Tabernacle. When you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, you become like a Tabernacle. You become a House for God’s very Presence

2. Let us remember what a tremendous gift Holy Eucharist is every time we receive Him in Holy Communion. He is there waiting for us, wanting us to draw near to Him, every time we go to Mass.

T9. Basic Materials Needed for this Study:

A. Basic Materials Needed for this Study:

1. Book called “A Biblical Walkthrough The Mass” – Understanding what we say and do in the Liturgy. Walk through all the different Mass parts and explore their Biblical foundations.
2. Workbook: Questions that helps you explore the Scriptures, apply it more to your lives.
3. Good Bible and Catechism of Catholic Church
4. Text at Mass
5. Video on The Mass