

THE PASTOR'S DESK

February 21, 2010 - The Mass: a sacrifice and meal



Dear Parishioners,

I have been speaking to the RCIA the last few weeks (in between snow storms) about the Eucharist and the Mass. I thought I would pass along some of what I said. The Mass is both a sacrifice and a meal. But, is it primarily one or the other? The answer is yes. It is primarily a sacrifice. It is a meal, secondarily, because it is a meal of the sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ. The Mass primarily makes present in a sacramental way the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Our Lord used the Passover meal to create a sacrament by which we could participate in this sacrifice: "This is my Body which will be given up for you."

John Paul II's last encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (The Church from the Eucharist), brought this out. The Venerable Holy Father said this:

"The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23) instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and his blood. The words of the Apostle Paul bring us back to the dramatic setting in which the Eucharist was born. The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord's passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but the sacramental re-presentation. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages. This truth is well expressed by the words with which the assembly in the Latin rite responds to the priest's proclamation of the "Mystery of Faith": "We announce your death, O Lord".

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift – however precious – among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since "all that Christ is – all that he did and suffered for all men – participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times".

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and "the work of our redemption is carried out". This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits. This is the faith from which generations of Christians down the ages have lived. The Church's Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed this faith with joyful gratitude for its inestimable gift. I wish once more to recall this truth and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes "to the end" (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.

This aspect of the universal charity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is based on the words of the Saviour

himself. In instituting it, he did not merely say; "This is my body", "this is my blood", but went on to add: "which is given for you", "which is poured out for you" (Lk 22:19-20). Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and his blood; he also expressed its sacrificial meaning and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all. "The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood".

The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever anew, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister. The Eucharist thus applies to men and women today the reconciliation won once for all by Christ for mankind in every age. "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice". Saint John Chrysostom put it well: "We always offer the same Lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one. For this reason the sacrifice is always only one... Even now we offer that victim who was once offered and who will never be consumed".

The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice nor does it multiply it.

As we begin Lent, perhaps this is a good time to reflect upon the sacrifice of Christ and how we conform our lives to this great mystery. I will be writing more about this and giving you more from this great Encyclical.

I hope everyone is dug-out from the snow. Please remember that we lost a lot in the collections over the last couple of weeks. If you could make up your donations for that period, that will go a long way to keeping us with a positive cash flow. Unfortunately, while we had huge deficits in our collections, we had significant expenses in snow removal.

**Have a blessed Lent,
Fr. LaHood**

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LENTEN RULES FOR FAST and ABSTINENCE:

Those aged 14 and over should abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent. Those between the ages of 18 and 59 should fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The law of fast allows one full meal and two lighter meals per day with no between-meal snacks.