

Understanding Catholicism

Summer 2016

Lesson Five: The Mass (part two) – the blood

Intro: What takes place.

Sunday Morning Mass

“Let us proclaim the mystery of the faith!”, declares the priest with a strong voice.

As directed by the liturgy priest and people respond together: “Christ has died. Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

Extending his hands over the consecrated bread and wine before him on the altar, the Priest lifted eyes to heaven and solemnly commemorated the Lord’s death.

“Father, we celebrate the memory of Christ, Your Son. We, Your people and Your ministers recall His passion. His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into glory.

The priest then offered to God the Father the sacrifice of His Son:

“From the many gifts You have given us, we offer to You, God of glory and majesty, this holy and perfect sacrifice: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation. With hands still out- stretched, he continued: Look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once You accepted the gifts Your servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our Father in faith, and the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchisedech.”

Then joining his hands, the priest, bowed low and prayed:

“Almighty God We pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven. Then, as we receive from this altar the sacred body and blood of your son, let us be filled with every grace and blessing.”

The offering of Christ completed, the priest prepared to apply the fruits of the sacrifice to the souls in purgatory. Standing erect, the priest petitioned God.

“Remember, Lord, those who have died and gone before us marked with the sign of faith. May all those who sleep in Christ find in Your presence light, happiness, and peace.”

After leading the congregation in the Lord’s Prayer, the priest took a large consecrated bread wafer and carefully broke it into three pieces. He dropped the smallest part into the chalice, the cup containing the consecrated wine, quietly saying:

“May this mingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive. Lord Jesus Christ, with faith in Your love and mercy I eat Your body and I drink Your blood. Let it not bring me condemnation, but health in mind and body.

Then aloud the priest proclaimed! “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” As he spoke, he elevated the host before the congregation, adding “Happy are those who are called to His supper.”

The people joined the priest in praying: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

Again in a soft voice, the Priest addressed God: “May the body of Christ bring me to everlasting life.” With those words he ate the remaining pieces of the broken wafer. Then, taking the chalice in his hands, he prayed, “May the blood of Christ bring me to everlasting life.” and drank the cup’s contents.

The priest having received the Eucharist himself prepared to distribute holy communion to the people. Those in the congregation wishing to receive the Eucharist quietly began forming two lines in front of the altar. The priest came and stood facing the head of the line. There he raised a consecrated host before each person saying, “the body of Christ,”

Each person responded, “Amen,” an affirmation of belief in the real Eucharistic presence of Christ, and received the host on the tongue or in the hand.

When communion was completed, the priest returned to the altar and began a cleaning ritual. First he collected any crumbs that had fallen from the host and dropped them into the chalice. Next, pouring water into the chalice, he rinsed fingers of all particles that had adhered to them. He then drank the contents of the cup and dried it with a white linen cloth. In everything the priest exercised extreme care lest even a fragment of consecrated matter be lost and desecrated. He then locked the remaining consecrated hosts in the church’s tabernacle.

“Let us Pray, the priest continued. “Lord, may we who receive this sacrament be led to the glory of heaven by the prayers of the Virgin Mary. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Extending his hands toward the congregation, he added, “the Lord be with you.”

“And also with you,” responded the people.

“May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” said the priest, making the sign of the cross.

“Amen.:

“The Mass is ended: go in peace,”

“Thanks be to God.” responded the people.

The priest bowed, kissed the altar, and exited the sanctuary through a side door. As he did the congregation began quietly filing out the back doors of the church.

Soon the building was emptied of all but two individuals, one congregant praying the Rosary for her husband’s soul and Christ locked within the tabernacle. A red lamp burned in the sanctuary, a silent witness to Christ’s bodily presence.

Once again for newcomers: we are letting the Catholic Church speak for itself. Sources of Catholic Doctrine. The primary Document which quotes many others is: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*— Edited by Joseph Ratzinger [Also known as Pope Benedict XVI (1994)]

Two books helpful in this study are:

- Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma – Ludwig Ott
- The Gospel According to Rome

Christ’s work of redemption is completely finished. Just before the Lord Jesus gave up His spirit upon the cross, Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). His sacrificial work of redemption was done.

The Greek verb in John 19:30 is in the perfect tense. “It implies a process, but views that process as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state.” In other words, the saving work of Christ was completed on the cross and continues in a state of completion. The verse can be translated: “It has been finished and stands complete” (John 19:30).

The Completion of the Cross
[1323, 1330, 1362,1372]

Roman Catholicism teaches that at the Last Supper, after consecrating the bread and wine, Jesus offered his body and blood to God the Father. Christ then gave his body and blood to the apostles to eat, instructing them, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19) By those words according to the church, Christ ordained His apostles “priests of the new covenant and commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to continue offering the Eucharist [1337]

In this way, Christ instituted a new Passover, namely the offering of himself by the church through the priests under visible signs, in memory of his own passage from this world to the Father.... Council of Trent. [170].

According to the Roman Catholic Church the Mass is a “true and proper sacrifice, not merely a symbolic rite, but the actual “sacrifice of the Eucharist [1367]. In the offering of the Mass there is a real victim, the Lord Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine. For this reason, the Church refers to consecrated bread wafers as hosts, from the Latin word meaning *Victim*. The offering is also real. The priest offers the immaculate victim to God the father, in the Holy Spirit.

Sacrifice is the primary purpose of the Mass. Pope John Paul II wrote “The Eucharist is above all else a sacrifice of the redemption and also the sacrifice of the New Covenant. [174]. At the Mass Christ offers himself to the Father through the hands of the priest [1088].

1. Each Mass presents again the sacrifice of the cross. [330, 1334, 1357]

In explaining the last supper, Roman Catholicism emphasizes that Christ consecrated the bread and wine *separately*. First He changed the bread; then He changed the wine. The priest observes this same order at the Mass.

For the blood, separately consecrated, serves to place before the eyes of all, in a more forcible manner, the passion of our Lord, His death, and the nature of His sufferings. –The Roman Catechism [181],

For this same reason the bread and wine remain separate at the Mass.

...the Eucharistic species under which He is present symbolize the actual separation of the body and blood. Thus the commemorative representation of His death, which actually took place on Calvary, is repeated in every sacrifice of the altar, seeing that Jesus Christ is symbolically shown by separate symbols to be in a state of victimhood. –Mediator Dei [182]

Consequently, coinciding with the consecration of the bread and wine is the immolation of Christ:

For in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated when “he begins to be present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.”

--Second Vatican Council [183]

Immolation is the sacrificial killing of a victim. The church says, however, that at the Mass Christ does not suffer, pour out His blood, or die. Rather, Christ experiences and “unbloody immolation.” By which He becomes sacramentally present under the appearances of bread and wine, a “most holy victim.” [1085, 1353, 1362, 1364, 1367, 1383, 1409, 1545].

Roman Catholicism teaches that once Christ is present in a state of victimhood upon the altar, He then offers himself to God the Father by the hands of the priest and in union with the Church, [1354, 1357]

The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of Christ Himself and the Church; in it Christ the Lord, by the ministry of a priest offers himself substantially present under the forms of bread and wine, to God the Father....
The Code of Canon Law [186]

This re-presentation of Christ occurs when the priest prays:

Father ... we offer to you, God of glory and majesty, this holy and perfect sacrifice: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation. Look with favor on these offerings and accept them... Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in Heaven. Then as we receive from this altar the sacred body and blood of your Son, let us be filled with every grace and blessing. --The Memorial Prayer [187]

The Church, therefore, considers the Mass to be a true sacrifice. The church requires that at every Mass ‘A cross, easily visible to the people, should be on the altar or somewhere not far from it.

2, Each Mass is a memorial of the sacrifice of the cross. [610-611, 1356-1358,1362-1372]

According to the Church, each Mass –

...reminds us that there is no salvation except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and that God himself wishes that there should be a continuation of this sacrifice....
—
Mediator Dei [188]

3, Each Mass applies the saving power of the sacrifice of the Cross. [1366, 1407, 1416, 1566]

Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ instituted the Eucharist –that the church might have a perpetual Sacrifice, by which our sins might be expiated. And our heavenly Father, oftentimes grievously offended by our crimes, might be turned away from wrath to mercy, from the severity of just chastisement to clemency.

--The Roman Catechism [199]

According to Roman Catholic belief, every time a priest offers the Mass, the wrath of God against sin is soothed. The Mass, even as the cross itself, is a propitiatory or appeasing sacrifice.

In this divine sacrifice which is performed in the mass the Lord is appeased by this offering, He gives the gracious gift of repentance, he absolves even enormous offenses and sins. –Council of Trent 194

Appesement is the Godward effect of the sacrifice of the Mass. The manward effect is expiation, the freeing of the sinner from punishment of sin. [1371, 1394, 1416].

The Sacrifice of the Mass benefits both the living and the dead. [1371, 1414, 1680]

Therefore, according to apostolic tradition it is quite properly offered not only for the sins, penalties satisfactions, and other needs of the faithful who are living, but also for those who have died in Christ, but are not fully cleansed. –Council of Trent [195]

As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living, and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God. –Catechism of the Catholic Church [1414]

Hence this usual prayer of the Church: As often as the commemoration of this victim is celebrated, so often is the work of our salvation being done, that is to say, through this unbloody Sacrifice flow to us the most plenteous fruits of that bloody victim. –The Roman Catechism [197].

A Biblical Response.

The concept of an ongoing sacrifice for sins is foreign to Biblical Christianity. The scriptures teach that “there is no longer any offering for sin.” (Hebrews 10:18) Christ has reconciled us to God “having made peace through the blood of His cross”(Colossians 1:20) Contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine, the Bible teaches:

- Christ asked to be *remembered* not sacrificed.
- Christ’s work of *redemption* is finished not continuing.
- Christ made every believer a *priest*, not a select few.

At the Last Supper the Lord instructed His disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Remembrance means “a calling to mind.” The Lord wanted His disciples to call to mind His work of salvation on the cross. With bread and wine before them, symbols of His body and blood, they were to proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (I Corinthians 11:26). This would be referred to later as the Lord’s Supper, (I Corinthians 11:20). Never the less, Roman Catholic theologians consider both the Last Supper and the Lord’s Supper to be real sacrifices.

We will consider four arguments that the Roman Catholic Church has put forth from scripture for the Church’s position.

Foretold by Jesus: Roman Catholic scholars claim that Jesus prophesied that there would be sacrifice in every place (John 4:21). Jesus however did not say there would be *sacrifice* throughout the world; He said there would be *worship* (John 4:21). In the verses that follow He describes that worship as being “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). He makes no mention of atonement sacrifice.

The Present Tense: Catholic scholars are arguing that since Christ spoke of His sacrifice at the last Supper in the present tense, then a sacrifice was occurring at that very instant. The Last Supper, therefore, was a true sacrifice. And since the Last supper was the first Mass, the Mass today is also a sacrifice.

This interpretation ignores the fact that the phrases “which is given” (Luke 22:19) and “[which is poured out” (Luke 22:20) are translations of Greek participles. A participle in the present tense does not necessarily refer to an event in present tense. “The time relations of the participle do not belong to its tense but to the sense of the context. [207].

In context, Jesus is speaking of His death the next day. He uses the present participle to vividly communicate the certainty of that yet *future event*. Even the translators of the Catholic *New American Bible* recognize that though Jesus was using the present tense at the Last Supper, He was speaking of a future event.

Jesus did not pour out His blood at the Last Supper, but on the cross. It is ridiculous to speak of His blood being “poured forth in the chalice” [209] for the forgiveness of sins.

Sacrifice of the New Covenant

The Last Supper was held on the Feast of the Passover or Pasch. In accordance with the law of Moses, Christ and His disciples observed the occasion by slaying, roasting, and eating a lamb (Exodus 12). The Roman Catholic Church says that Christ, having celebrated the old Passover, then” ...instituted a new Passover, namely the offering of himself by the church through its priest under visible signs... [1068, 1364,1405]:

As often as the sacrifice of the cross by which “Christ our Pasch is sacrificed” (I Corinthians 5:7) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out. --Second Vatican Council [211]

Once again the church goes beyond what scripture teaches. Nowhere does the Bible state that the sacrifice of the new covenant is the Last Supper, the Lord’s Supper, or the Mass. The only atoning sacrifice of the

new covenant is the cross the finished redemptive work of Christ. Christ is not being sacrificed; He has been sacrificed on the cross.

Sacrifice of the Altar

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. —I Corinthians 10:21

The Roman Catholic Church claims that this verse shows that Paul understood the Lord’s Supper to be a sacrifice.

And the apostle Paul indicates the same clearly enough in writing to the Corinthians, when he says that those contaminated by sharing in the table of demons cannot be sharers in the table of the Lord. By “table” meaning “altar” in both places.

--Council of Trent

The Church wishes to substitute the word “table” here with the word “altar” because altars are for sacrifices while tables are for meals. This change would strengthen the Church’s claim that the first Christians understood the Lord’s supper to be a sacrifice. Such a substitution, however cannot be justified.

According to Roman Catholic theology, at over 120 million Masses each year four things occur:

• An Immolation

The church teaches that at each mass, through the words and actions of the priest, Christ is immolated—made present in His victimhood upon the altar under the appearance of bread and wine. This says the church is “no mere empty commemoration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ’ but a true and proper act of sacrifice...an unbloody immolation. a most acceptable victim...[220]. This doctrine terribly misrepresents the present resurrected and glorified state of the Lord Jesus Christ. The scriptures teach that “Christ, having been raised from the dead is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. (Romans 6:9). Furthermore, the Bible makes no mention of an unbloody immolation. Scripture teaches that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22). If there is no blood, there is no propitiation. “for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11).

• A Re-Presentation

The church teaches that at each Mass, Christ ...” offers Himself a most acceptable victim to the Eternal Father, as He did upon the cross. [221]. The church explains that the priest is praying that “the Body and Blood of Christ may be the acceptable sacrifice which brings salvation to the whole world. [223].

This re-presentation of Christ in His victimhood, allegedly occurring millions of times each year at the Mass, misrepresents the accepted work of Christ. The Bible teaches that Christ presented the sacrifice of His life to the Father only once. His purpose was to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). He “entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption’ (Romans 9:12). The Father accepted the perfect sacrifice of Christ without reservation’ (Hebrews 9:12).

The greatest manifestation of the Father’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice came three days later. The Bible says that Jesus “was raised from the dead because of our justification” (Romans 4:25), Christ’s offering for sin had been accepted (I Corinthians 15:17,20).

The scriptures further teach, speaking of Christ: "when He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:3). He sat down because His work was finished. He remains until a future day: "He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time sat down at the right of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for his feet, (Hebrews 10:12,13).

- **An Appeasement**

Roman Catholicism teaches that the Sacrifice of the Mass is a truly propitiatory sacrifice of infinite value [225, 226].

It is offered for the sins, penalties, satisfactions and other needs of the living, but also for the those who have died in Christ but are not yet fully cleansed. Council of Trent [227].

Through each Mass, says the Roman Catholic Church God's anger against sin is pacified [1371, 1414].

The Lord is appeased by this offering, He gives the gracious gift of repentance, He absolves even enormous offenses and sins. ==Council of Trent [228].

To the contrary, the Lord is offended by the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass. God has already told us that He is fully satisfied with the once -for -all offering of Christ on the cross. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). The "Holy spirit also bears witness to us ...saying ...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:15,17). Scripture repeatedly calls the cross the "once-for all" offering of Christ (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12,26,28,10:10; Romans 6:10; I Peter 3:18). To continue to try to appease God with an on-going sacrifice is an act of unbelief.

- **An Application**

Finally, Roman Catholicism teaches that at each Mass the blessings of Calvary are meted out: to Catholics.

The august sacrifice of the altar is, as it were, the supreme instrument whereby the merits won by the divine redeemer upon the cross are distributed to the faithful; --Mediator Dei [229]

Since the merits of the cross are primarily available through the Mass the Church urges priests to celebrate the Eucharist frequently, daily if possible. Priests are to do this with the salvation of the world in view.

Pope Pius XII wrote that Christ—daily offers Himself upon our altars for our redemption, that we may be rescued from eternal damnation and admitted into the company of the elect.

All of this stands in contradiction to the Bible. Scripture teaches that God freely and immediately bestows upon each true believer "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). These He lavishes upon His children in Christ. (Ephesians 1:7,8). Nowhere does God require a Christian to participate in an ongoing sacrifice to obtain his or her blessings in Christ. The Roman Catholic Church's teaching that the Sacrifice of the Mass is "the supreme instrument whereby the merits won by the divine Redeemer upon the cross are distributed to the faithful." [237] is just one more way in which the church makes people dependent upon it for the blessings of God.