



The Bible and the Mass

Five Dimensions of Meaning in the Mass

Opening Prayer

- Word of God: 1 Thess 5:14-17
- O Lord of justice, your coming overthrows all that is unrighteous. Fill us with expectation and transform our hearts and lives, that we may welcome you when you come. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



The power point of this presentation is available at:

<https://www.ceorockford.org/adult-faith-formation/>

“The most significant challenge facing the Catholic Church today is the attrition of our own people”



“Go and make disciples...baptize... teach...” Mt 28:20

- ✓ 41% → raised Catholic but left (50% - millennials)
- ✓ 6 – 1 → leaving vs. entering
- ✓ 13% → Americans identify as “former Catholics”
- ✓ 23% → Catholics who attend Mass weekly
- ✓ 65% → decrease in Catholic weddings since 1970
- ✓ Catholics decreasing faster than any other denomination

The Eucharistic Liturgy is

- ... the source of supernatural life
- ... encounter God’s transforming power/grace
- ... our best contact with God’s Divine Love
- ... **“summit** toward which the activity of the Church is directed and **fount** from which all her power flows”
SC 10, Vat II



CCC 1323

"At the Last Supper... our Savior 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 ... 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.*'"

What Happens at Mass?

"I want to show what the Mass means and where its center is... *Something happens at Mass. God is acting! He acts to save us. It is a huge event. In fact, there is nothing bigger.* God has concentrated the entirety of His saving love for the world into the ritual action and words of the Eucharistic liturgy." Jeremy Driscoll OSB

General Introduction to the Roman Missal

"... for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated, *the work of our redemption is accomplished*" GIRM 3

5 Dimensions of Meaning in the Mass

- 1. Thanksgiving
- 2. Remembrance
- 3. Sacrifice
- 4. Communion
- 5. Anticipation of Christ's return

1. Thanksgiving

CCC 1328

"It is called: Eucharist, *because it is an action of thanksgiving to God*. The Greek words *eucharistein* and *eulogein* recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: *creation, redemption, and sanctification*."

Psalm 116

12 How can I repay the LORD for all the great good done for me?
 13 *I will raise the cup of salvation* and call on the name of the LORD.
 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
 15 Dear in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his devoted.
 16 LORD, I am your servant, your servant, the child of your maidservant;
 you have loosed my bonds.
 17 *I will offer a sacrifice of praise* and call on the name of the LORD.
 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,
 19 In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Hallelujah!

Leviticus 7

11 This is the ritual for the *communion sacrifice* that is offered to the LORD. 12 If someone offers it for *thanksgiving*, that person shall offer it with unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes made of bran flour mixed with oil and well kneaded. 13 One shall present this offering together with loaves of leavened bread along with the thanksgiving communion sacrifice.

After Abraham's victory over the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Genesis 14: 18-20

Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out *bread and wine*, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High who delivered your foes into your hand."

Ephesians 2:1-7

You were dead in your transgressions and sins... But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, *brought us to life with Christ... raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens with Christ Jesus...* that he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.



A deep sense of thankfulness leads to worship. How can you develop and embrace a spirit of thankfulness daily?

2. Remembrance

Luke 22:19

“Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you; **do this in memory of me.**”

Exodus 12:14

[The Lord’s directive to Moses and Aaron on celebrating Passover annually]

This day will be a day of **remembrance** for you, which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD; you will celebrate it as a statute forever.

The celebration of Passover and the Eucharist involve much more than mental recall. Both events (i.e. the Passover remembers the liberation of Israel from bondage, the Eucharist remembers Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection) are *made present again* or "*re-presented*" each time they are commemorated in sacred ritual. Cf. CCC 1366

CCC 1363

In the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men (Ex 13:3). In the liturgical celebration of these events, *they become in a certain way present and real*. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them. 1364 In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. *When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present."*

"At the Last Supper, Jesus desired to institute a new Passover memorial, one that would remember the mighty act of salvation by which we are freed from sin and death. While the Passover of Israel interprets and memorializes the central event of the OT, *the Eucharist interprets and remembers the central event of the NT (Jesus' death and resurrection)*. Both remembrances were given on the evening before the historical event occurred, and *both serve to connect subsequent generations to that redeeming experience.*"

Stephen Binz



“Spiritual amnesia” was a problem for the people of Israel and the early Church as well. They simply failed to remember all that God had done for them. What are the hazards of spiritual amnesia? How does it appear today?

3. Sacrifice

The book of Leviticus articulates an old and perennial agenda in Israel in which there is an awareness of the radical ‘otherness’ of YHWH who cannot be approached casually, but who can be hosted only with rigorous, disciplined intentionality.” W. Brueggemann

- “No one shall appear before me empty-handed” – Ex 23:15
- Biblical worship is essentially offering of a sacrifice = to make an offering to God of something of value – an animal, grain, food, drink, or incense.
- = recognition of the debt we owe God as the source of life and blessing, seeking union w/ him
- Offers oneself in total surrender – Rom 12:1 *“offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship”*

- Sacrificial System – Ex 25:15, 34:20, 29:43. A sacrifice is something made sacred by being offered to God. It offered people a way to express gratitude and indebtedness to God, and make amends for their sins.
- Lev 17:11 – “Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may be made for your own lives, because it is the blood as the seat of life that makes atonement”

CCC 1366-1367

The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it represents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross...*The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice:* "The victim is one and the same ... only the manner of offering is different."

"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."

False Sacrifice

- Jer 7:21-23, Isa 1:11-16, Amos 5:21-24, Hosea 6:6
- “Critiques, in general, focus on priests’ religion as legalistic, restrictive, servile, destructive of spontaneity, too taken up with externals of religion, a self-protected, self-serving, restricted caste, jealously guarding its privileges and perquisites.” Jos. Blenkinsopp

How do you join in *offering your life as a sacrifice* with Christ to the Father in Mass cf. Romans 12:1?



4. Communion

- **Koinonia** – Acts 4:32-35, “the community of believers was of one mind and one heart”
- Phil 2:1-2 – “...being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing”
- 1 Cor 10:16-17 – “many are made one by sharing one loaf, that is, the one body of Christ

- Altar = place where God and people meet, Ex 29:43
- Sacrifice offers life and blots out obstacles to God caused by sin
- Communion banquet = consuming sacrifice now made holy through God’s acceptance
- Becomes means of union with God
- Unites believers with Christ AND one another

CCC 1396

Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body - the Church.

Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call..."

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22. What does St. Paul have to say about *koinonia* and the Eucharist?



Anticipation of Christ's Return

- The Eucharistic communion anticipates the heavenly banquet which brings a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised to the faithful, allowing us a glimpse of heaven on earth.
- Isaiah 25:6 – “the Lord of Hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines...”

CCC 1326

“Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already *unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life*, when God will be all in all.”

**A Glimpse of the Heavenly Liturgy
Rev 5:6-14**

I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing.”

CCC 1405

There is no surer pledge or dearer *sign of this great hope* in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells," *than the Eucharist*. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the *medicine of immortality, the antidote for death*, and the *food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ*."

When we celebrate the Mass, we do God's will most fully "on earth as it is in heaven."



In what sense does this understanding of Eucharist, as heaven on earth, add to my understanding and appreciation of the church's worship?

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