



LESSON 26: The Eucharist — How We Worship

Overview

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we participate in the one sacrifice of Christ, the everlasting pledge of his love of the Father and each of us. The movements, words, silence, and whole structure of the Mass leads us into a personal encounter with the living God in the Eucharist. To receive Jesus worthily in Communion is the highest union we can experience with God this side of heaven.

Saint Quote

“When you have received Holy Communion, close your bodily eyes so that you may open the eyes of your soul. Then look upon Jesus in the center of your heart.” —St. Teresa of Avila

Opening Prayer *Anima Christi*

Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from Christ’s side, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within Thy wounds hide me. Suffer me not to be separated from Thee. From the malicious enemy, defend me. In the hour of my death, call me. And bid me come unto Thee, That I may praise Thee with Thy saints. And with Thy angels Forever and ever. Amen.

Sacred Scripture *Gospel of John 6:41-59*

Catechism 1345-55; 1385-88

DOES WHAT I DO AT MASS REALLY MATTER?

It is not infrequent, especially as teenagers and in our young adult years, to become somewhat bored at Mass. Does this mean I am a terrible person? No. There is an abundance of reasons for a person of any age to get distracted, bored, or uninterested at Mass. However, there is no reason to let it remain this way. Learning more about the what, why, and how of worship is the duty of every Christian, and failure to do so will only result in you being continuously bored or not desirous of praying and participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Your interior dispositions, thoughts, and attitudes toward worship and your intellectual understanding of the Mass all affect how you experience it. Instead of treating the Mass like passive entertainment, like a movie or sporting event, the Mass invites you to be invested with your whole self, body, mind, and soul. What you do doesn't change the fact that God will still come to us in the consecrated host and wine that is his Body and Blood, but your ability to receive this gift and respond to it will always be less than optimal the less you put into it.

HOW DOES THE MASS HELP ME?

The Mass is very similar to the Gospel passage in Luke called the “Road to Emmaus.” In that passage, Jesus after his death and resurrection is walking with two disciples and explains to them all of Scripture and is made known to them in the breaking of the bread. This image is an analogy for the whole Mass: in the Liturgy of the Word, Scripture is read and explained to us in the homily; in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Jesus comes to us in the consecrated bread and wine that are his Body and Blood. Furthermore, the Mass unites you with the angels and saints, and Christians throughout the world, in offering to God praise and honor, which is our duty and joy as his beloved children. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and receiving our Lord in the Eucharist is the surest and quickest way to heaven and helps us to fight off sin and temptation. The better question might be this: How does the Mass not help me? The answer is simple—it only helps you!

DO I HAVE TO SING, OR BE AN ALTAR SERVER OR READER, TO BE “DOING MY PART”?

Participation in the Holy Mass is first and foremost an interior act of the will and intellect, and therefore not explicitly something that manifests itself in external ways. However, the parts of the Mass common to the faithful, especially the reciting or singing of the ordinary parts of the Holy Mass like the introductory antiphon, the dialogues throughout the Mass between the priest and people, the Confiteor, the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Psalm, the Gospel Acclamation, the Creed, the Sanctus, the Great Amen, the Agnus Dei, Communion Antiphon, and the dismissal dialogue are all part of what you should participate in regardless of your perceived singing abilities. Volunteering for a ministry within the Mass itself is not required of anyone but is an external sign of your love for our Lord and his most precious Body and Blood which is given to us in the Mass, and truly it is an honor. Working on your interior dispositions at Mass is the first step toward getting more out of it and understanding that God may be calling you to serve in some way can really only come from the fruits of participating in the Holy Sacrifice, first through your deliberate acts of the will and intellect and your feelings and thoughts. You should always talk with your priest about this if you are interested in serving in some way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you get ready for Mass?
- What's the hardest part of Mass for you?
- Do you know someone who really seems to “get it” when they receive Holy Communion?
- How might you change your habits to better be ready for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?