

KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY



We are very concerned about two alarming developments that have taken place in the Catholic Church during the past few decades, especially in the U.S., regarding the Lord's Day: One concern is the declining attendance of Catholics at weekly Sunday Mass; the other is the decline among Catholics in the belief of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We examine these phenomena in this essay.

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By Monsignor Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

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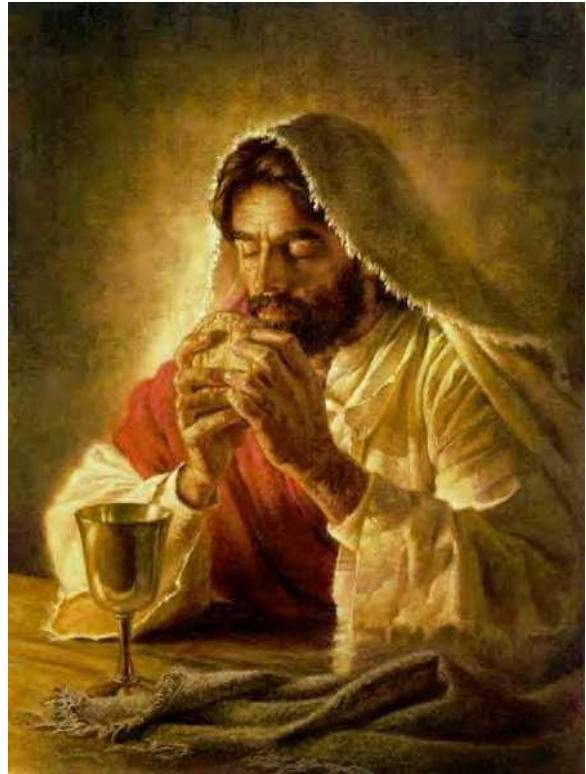
Keep Holy the Lord's Day and the Lord's Day will Keep Us Holy

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Introduction

We are very concerned about two alarming developments that have taken place in the Catholic Church during the past few decades, especially in the U.S., regarding the Lord's Day: one concern is the declining attendance of Catholics at weekly Sunday Mass; the other is the decline among Catholics in the belief of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Of course, this is related to the decline in Sunday church attendance. Let's begin our discussion by first looking at statistics indicating that there has been a precipitous decline in Mass attendance over the past several decades.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, three polls conducted from 2000-2003 indicated, on average, that 33 percent of Catholics said they attended Mass every week. The researchers assumed that the less frequent attendees were relatively random in their attendance, adding an estimated additional 9 percent, bringing the total weekly Mass attendance to 41 percent. This is consistent with a Gallup survey in 2003 that found, on average, only 40 percent of Catholics said they attended Mass within seven days of being surveyed.



Jesus Christ instituting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or Eucharist at the Last Supper, which made present his Body and Blood and his sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary.

CARA Statistics for Mass Attendance

CARA's information for Mass attendance in the U.S. was obtained in a series of ten national random-sample telephone polls of adult Catholics. It claims that attendance had not changed much over the survey period, which disputes the perception that Catholics are turning away from the Church in large numbers in recent years, especially in light of the recent clergy sexual abuse scandal. However, the statistics are very poor compared with Mass attendance four

decades ago. For example, data collected by the Gallup Organization indicates that Catholic Mass attendance has been in a precipitous decline since 1957 and 1958 when 74 percent of Catholics reported attending weekly Mass within 7 days of the survey. The decline can be explained largely by the death of older Catholics who attend Mass more often being gradually replaced by new adult Catholics who attend Mass much less often.

In its research, CARA says that it uses three generational categories relevant to Catholics. These include the Pre-Vatican II Generation, the Vatican II Generation, and the Post-Vatican II Generation.

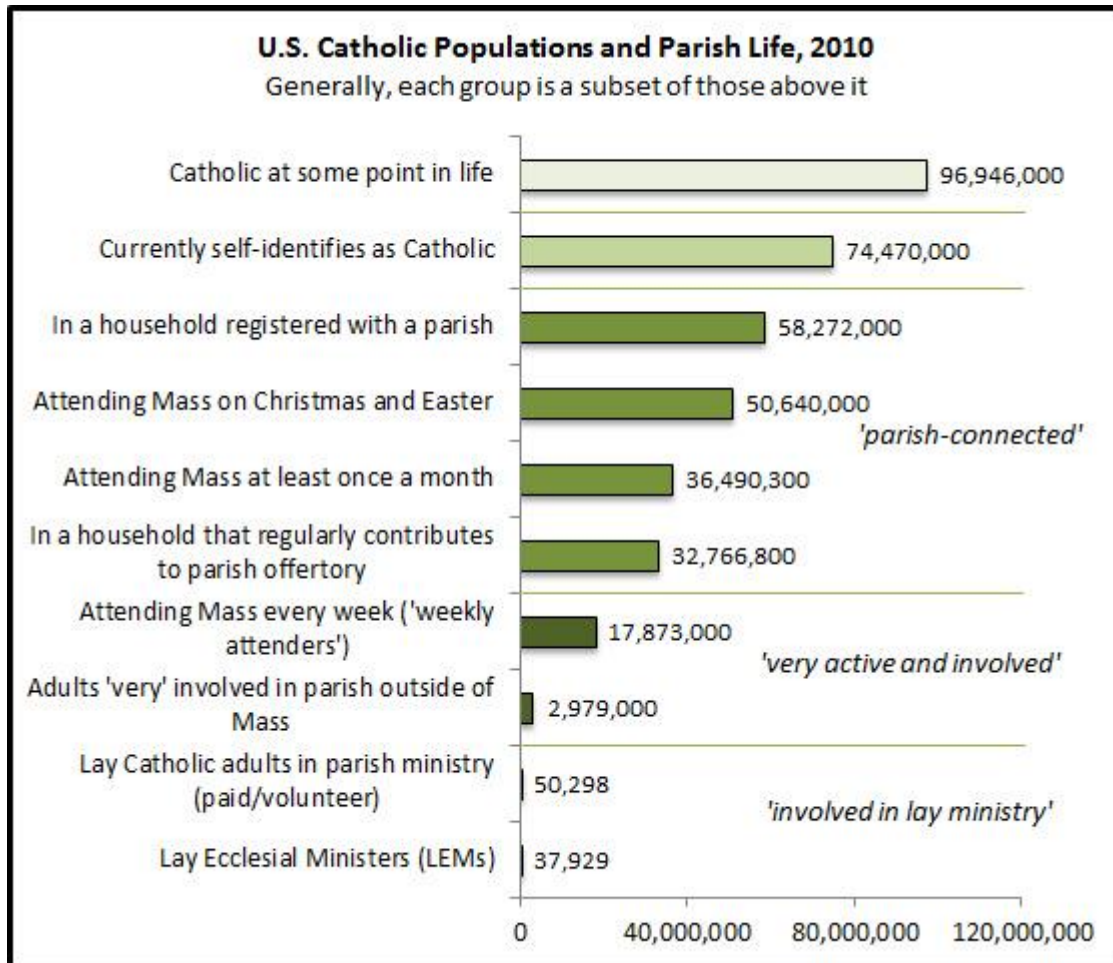
- **Pre-Vatican II Generation:** Those Catholics born before 1943 came of age in a period prior to the changes of the Second Vatican Council and tend to exhibit high levels of institutional loyalty, including loyalty to the Catholic Church.
- **Vatican II Generation:** Members of this generation were born between 1943 and 1960 and encompass the groups that came of age during a time of profound change in the Catholic Church and society as a whole. Overlapping the generation more widely known as the “baby boomers”, these Catholics entered adulthood during a time of great questioning of civic and cultural institutions.
- **Post-Vatican II Generation.** This generation, born after 1960, includes the largest numbers of adult Catholics (about half) who have no experience of the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. Due to its disproportionate size, CARA divides the Post-Vatican II Generation into two segments, one for those older than 30 and one for those between the ages of 18 and 30.

According to CARA Research Associate Mark M. Gray, Ph.D., in 2003 slightly more than 20 percent of Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics say they attend Mass at least once a week or more. By comparison, 52 percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics and 38 percent of Vatican II Generation Catholics report weekly Mass attendance. He says that the levels of attendance by these generations are unchanged from CARA’s September 2000 poll.

Weekly Mass Attendance	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Mass Attendance. Prior to 2000, CARA reports Gallup estimates of the % attending in <i>any given week</i> adjusted for the effects of social desirability bias. From 2000 on the data are from the CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) and represents the % of U.S. adult Catholics who say they attended Mass <i>every week</i> .	55%	48%	42%	41%	41%	39%	35%	22%	23%	24%	24%

He also says that “There is not evidence that the Mass attendance of younger or older Catholics changed after allegations of clergy sexual abuse entered the news However, stark generational differences in Mass attendance are evident that may in part reflect changes in the way Catholic teachings were communicated prior to and after the Second Vatican Council.” On the

other hand, he says that “Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics grew up in an era where deliberately failing to attend Sunday Mass or other days of obligation, without good reason, was quite clearly communicated as a mortal sin. For the Vatican II and Post-Vatican II generations this has not been emphasized to the same degree.”



This table was taken from Nineteen Sixty-four which is a research blog for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University edited by Mark M. Gray.

Statistics on the Declining Catholic Belief in the Real Presence

The second problem that we are very concerned about is the declining belief of Catholics in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We think that the two problems are related. One of the main reasons that Mass attendance is down so much is the fact that so many Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence. According to an alarming 1992 Gallup poll, the majority of Catholics are confused in their beliefs about Christ's presence in the Eucharist:

- Only 30 percent believed they were really and truly receiving the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

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- 29 percent believe they are receiving bread and wine that *symbolize* the body and blood of Jesus (transignification or transfinalization).
- 10 percent believe they receive *bread and wine* in which Jesus is also present (consubstantiation, the Lutheran view).
- 24 percent believe they are receiving what has become Christ's body and blood because of their *personal belief*.

Any well-informed Catholic will recognize that only the first option, chosen by the only 30 percent, represents true Catholic teaching. The other options represent various Protestant beliefs. In other words, nearly 70 percent of all Catholics in this country hold erroneous beliefs about Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Differences according age: The problem increases dramatically among younger Catholics. According to a more recent *New York Times* and CBS poll of Catholics who attend Mass regularly, the number of Catholics who accept the Real Presence decreases as age decreases:

- Age 65 and over: 51percent believe in the Real Presence
- Age 45–64: 37 percent believe in Real Presence.
- Age 30–44: 28 percent believe in Real Presence.
- Age 18–29: 17 percent believe in Real Presence.

Seventy percent of this last age group, those 18–29, believe that the Eucharist is just a *symbol*. What does this tell us about how we have been passing the faith on to our children? Only one teenager in six accepts the fundamental doctrine of the Real Presence! This loss of faith among young and old alike explains the tremendous lack of devotion, reverence, and appreciation so many Catholics show at Mass and Holy Communion. Also, as we said above, we think that it is the main reason Mass attendance has declined so precipitously during the past four decades. Even many of those who attend are not reverent or know what is going on

Of the other Western nations, Holland has one of the lowest records of Mass attendance. According to KASKI (the Catholic Social Ecclesiastical Institute), in the whole country only 9 percent of the faithful attend Mass on Sundays. In some areas of the larger cities only 3 percent attend Sunday Mass. In the large industrial town of Einhoven, home of the electrical and electronic multinational Philips, located in a formerly Catholic province, only 6 percent attend Mass on Sundays.

To quote Fr. John Hardon, probably the greatest catechist of the twentieth century and formerly spiritual director to Mother Teresa:

In the United States alone, over 150 parishes have been closed in just three dioceses within the last few years. Most of the once flourishing, Catholic elementary and secondary schools have been closed. Catholic seminarians in our country have dropped by 90

percent in the last thirty years. Attendance at Sunday Mass, in not a few dioceses has dropped from 50-80% since the close of Vatican II. Behind this phenomenon is the loss of faith among so many once believing Roman Catholics.”

Cultural Reasons for the decline

Everyone who thinks about this matter has his list of culprits, but we think that the causes can be grouped under two general headings: Cultural and Sociological. By cultural we mean the way of life of a people, which includes not only material cultural artifacts, but a system of ideas as well. Our idea system in the Western World, and especially in the U.S., is dominated by skepticism, rationalism, materialism, hedonism, subjectivism, and relativism.

Skepticism: Simply put, skepticism is the view that humans cannot achieve complete or perfect knowledge of anything, especially in religious and moral matters. Except for a few hard scientific facts, the skeptic tells us that we can't know anything outside of our minds; all that we can know with any degree of certainty is what is in our minds, and even that is doubtful, because we can be mistaken for many reasons. The consequence of this is we can't know anything with certainty, because there is no objective truth or reality that exists outside of us. When applied to morality, since we can't know anything with certainty, morality is considered entirely a matter of individual preference or opinion; there are no fixed and eternal values. As we will soon see, skepticism leads to other ideologies, such as rationalism and relativism, because all values are considered relative to time, place, circumstance, situation, relevance, context, proportion, consequence, or some other such notion. The true skeptic is a chronic doubter. There is nothing wrong with a healthy methodic doubt, after all one shouldn't be gullible, but when sufficient proof has been given regarding some matter, especially in matters of religion or morality, we are obligated to give assent to it.

Rationalism: Rationalism comes from a Latin word meaning “belonging to reason.” In philosophy it means a theory that holds that reason alone, unaided by experience, can arrive at basic truth regarding the world. It is ironic that rationalism got its main start from Rene Descartes, a seventeenth century French philosopher who formulated his philosophy of methodic doubt to counter the skepticism of his day. Associated with rationalism is the doctrine of innate ideas and the method of logically deducing truths about the world from “self-evident” premises. This describes Descartes methodology. The opposite of rationalism is empiricism, an approach that utilizes the senses and experimentation with which to verify knowledge. Rationalism is not necessarily bad if it doesn't exclude empiricism and theology as valid methods of searching for truth. Rationalism and the other isms that we are considering have come to dominate our thinking to the exclusion of religion and of things of the spirit. (See the sections on this website *Reasons to Believe*, and *Aristotelian-Thomistic* philosophy for more detailed information about this and other philosophical subjects.)

Materialism: Materialism is a philosophic system that denies the existence of any other kind

of substance other than that composed of matter, such as spirit, and claims that all phenomena of the universe can and must be explained by matter and the forces or energies inherent in and intrinsically dependent upon matter. From a practical point of view, materialism is an excessive desire for material goods, the acquisition of things such as power, property, privileges, prestige, and possessions.

Hedonism: Hedonism is an ethical system that holds that feelings of pleasure or happiness are the highest and final aim of conduct, so that actions increasing the sum of pleasure are thereby right and those increasing pain are thereby wrong. Practically speaking, hedonism is an excessive desire for pleasure. It is an excessive desire to have fun.

Subjectivism: Fr. Hardon defines subjectivism in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “any view of human nature and activity that denies the objective order of reality.” He informs us that it takes on one of three principal forms:

- In philosophy, it claims that a human being can have no direct knowledge or certitude about the world outside the mind.
- In theology, it holds that faith is essentially each person's own experience, and not the free assent of the mind to God's revelation.
- In morals, it admits no principles or norms of conduct except those created by each individual's autonomous will, which is then equated with conscience.

Relativism: Moral skepticism leads to relativism. Relativism is the view that truth is relative and may vary from individual to individual, from group to group, or from time to time, having no objective standard. An example is cultural relativism, which claims that different cultures have different, but perfectly legitimate and equally valid standards of truth and value. Relativism is often just another word for subjectivism. As stated above, by subjectivism is meant an ideology or philosophy that holds the only valid standard of judgment is that of the individual. For example, ethical subjectivism holds that individual conscience is the only appropriate standard for moral judgment. Pope Emeritus Benedict believes our biggest enemy is moral relativism, the belief that something is right or wrong depending on time, place, circumstance, situation, relevance, consequence, proportion, context, etc.

All of these “isms” have contributed to a loss of faith in affluent Western societies. The reason for this is that to the extent our lives are dominated skepticism, rationalism, materialism, hedonism, subjectivism, and relativism, we are not Christ-like; we are not like Jesus; we are not leading our lives in accordance with God's will; we are not obeying his commandments as we should. No matter how much we might know about Jesus, and in today's world chances are many of us don't know very much, most of us don't know him personally very well, if at all. Faith, that is our belief in God and his promises, can be strong only to the extent our lives are configured to Jesus'. Only to the extent we achieve being images of God—the image he created us to be—will our faith be strong. Faith is an infused virtue; one placed in our souls by God, and to the extent that one's life is dominated by false ideologies, such as we have been discussing, the weaker will be his or her faith, and we might add the other infused theological virtues—hope and

charity. There simply isn't room for God when our lives are dominated by false ideologies. The more we make our wills in accordance with God's will and obey his commandments, the more of God's grace will we have in our souls, and grace is God's life in our souls, it is our participation in the inner life of the Trinity who dwells in us when we are in a state of sanctifying grace. The more grace we have, the more faith, hope, and charity we will have. We have to live the Faith to have faith.

Sociological Reasons for the Decline

Now that we have discussed cultural reasons for the decline in Mass attendance and belief in the Real Presence, let's consider the sociological reasons. Sociology involves the way a society is structured, functions, and changes. Several sociological reasons could be given for a loss of faith among Americans and the people of other affluent nations, such as:

Social mobility: The rising of later generations of Catholics into the middle and upper classes has been one of the most important factors in their secularization. By secularization is meant a this-worldly orientation rather than an otherworldly one. The opposite of secular is spiritual. More affluent people tend to be more secular minded.

Educational levels: An equally important sociological factor that had contributed to the secularization of the American people is an increase in their educational levels. As Catholics have become more educated, or miseducated, the more secular they have become, even to the point that there hardly exists any difference between Catholics and non-Catholics on this matter. Higher educated people tend to become more secular minded; they tend to become more secular whether they be Catholics or of other faiths or of no faith.

Urbanization: No doubt, urbanization has contributed to the secularization of the American people, including Catholics. Urban people tend to be more secular in their way of thinking.

Industrialization: Also industrialization has been correlated with a weakening of religious faith, probably because industrial economies produce more goods and services, which tend to make people more affluent and as a result more materialistic.

Science and technology: Science and technology have contributed in various ways to the secularization of Americans and those living in affluent countries. Science offers materialistic answers to complex problems and technology, which is the application of scientific knowledge to practical matters, contributes to secular mindedness.

Another factor that has caused the decline in Mass attendance and belief in the Real Presence is that after Vatican II the theological liberals or neo-modernists virtually took over the various institutions of the Church in the U.S. Although the subject is a very complex one, by neo-modernist we mean those who want to water down the teachings of the Church to accommodate the modern world. Theological liberals, that is those who wanted to make substantial changes in

the Church, came to occupy many if not most of the key positions in the chanceries, deaneries, and parishes. They took over most of the Catholic press and publishing houses. They came to control the parochial school system. They hijacked the catechetical establishment in the Church at all levels. Much of the decline in the Catholic Church in the U.S. during the past 50 years can be attributed to poor catechesis of our children. The emphasis has been too heavily on the experiential at almost the total expense of the doctrinal and much of the teaching of doctrine was tainted with neo-modernism. In addition, the liturgical establishment in the Church came to be dominated by neo-Modernists. Also, many religious orders were captured by the liberals as well as many hospitals and most of the seminaries, colleges and universities. Most schools of higher education today are Catholic in name only. And this list hardly exhausts the organizations in the Church controlled by Neo-Modernists. All of this has had an impact on Mass attendance and belief in the Real Presence.

Fr. John Hardon on the Crises of Faith and the Eucharist

What effect do these ideologies have on Catholics belief in the Real Presence and Mass attendance? We believe that Fr. John Hardon S.J., has the best answer for these questions. Until his death in 2002, he was one of the world's greatest catechists. Not only did he write several fine catechisms for the general Catholic membership, but also he wrote numerous articles and conducted many seminars and conferences on catechetical subjects. He founded and was very active in the Real Presence Association, whose goal was to promote Eucharistic Education and Adoration. The Real Presence Association is a nationally focused apostolate promoting perpetual adoration. Their start-up manual contains the principals of Eucharistic adoration according to church teaching, counsel for leadership by local pastors, pointers for parish catechesis and for setting up a chapel for adoration. Fr. Hardon tells us that Pope John Paul II himself gave him direct orders to do everything he could to restore faith in the Real Presence in his country, otherwise, the Pope said, "I fear for the survival of many of your dioceses in America."



Fr. John Hardon was a renowned catechist and retreat master. His *Catholic Catechism* was the standard until the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He served as a consultant for the drafting of that document. He was also spiritual director to Mother Teresa.

Fr Hardon tells us that the loss of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is due to an overall loss of faith. He says that faith is something that we believe on the word of another. He says that it is one thing to believe in what other people tell us and something else to believe in God. To believe in what people tell us is called human faith. To believe in what God has revealed to us is called Divine faith. To make sure we understand what he means by this, Fr. Hardon goes on to say that Divine faith is the assent of our intellect to what God has revealed, not because we understand what God tells us is true, but only because we accept a truth on his authority. We believe what God tells us because he who is goodness and truth can neither deceive, nor be deceived. We have a much more detailed discussion of the meaning of faith and its relationship to reason in our essay and radio recording on Apologetics in this website.

According to Fr. Hardon, St. John the Evangelist raised one of the most embarrassing questions in the Bible where he asked, why is it that we who are so ready to believe in men are so slow to believe in God? Fr. Hardon says that the answer is painfully obvious. He says that "we are so slow to believe in God because what he demands of us is nothing less than to accept incomprehensible mysteries which are beyond our human capacity even to conceive before they are revealed, and beyond our grasp to fully penetrate even after they are revealed."

Fr. Hardon tells us that the Church is faced with a crisis of faith. By this he means that 'we are in a critical period in the Church's life when millions of her faithful are confused about their beliefs.' He says that "they are uncertain about what as Catholics they are to hold. And as a

result they are emotionally insecure, bewildered and, in Christ's words, wandering as sheep without a shepherd." He identifies three groups of people in the Church regarding their faith:

- Some are in open rebellion against the faith of their fathers.
- Others are not yet ready to discard the Faith; they may still cherish with one part of their being, maybe for emotional or ritual or personal reasons.
- A third group of people are not rejecting the Faith or in serious doubt about Catholic doctrine, but they are bewildered. Fr. Hardon says that modern popes have addressed in their documents the synonyms for bewilderment that besets millions of the still faithful. He says that are "confused, and distraught, and perplexed, and worried and some are all but crushed by the spectacle of a post-conciliar Church that is caught up in an interior convulsion of spirit that has rocked all of Christendom to its foundations."

Why does Fr. Hardon think that such a crisis came about in the first place? He says that there is a crisis of faith in the Catholic Church because there has been an intrusion of alien ideas. He says that an idea is alien to any religion when it openly contradicts what that religion stands for. Perhaps he had in mind some of the ideas that we discussed; skepticism, materialism. Hedonism, and the like, but during one of his conference talks he referred to theological ideas specific to theological matters. Among the alien ideas introduced into the Church that he mentions are that God is merely finite; that Jesus is merely human; that the priesthood is not a sacramental ministry, but merely a functional ministry; that marriage is dissoluble; that religious life should be without rules; that Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is merely symbolic, and other aberrations. These and many other alien ideas appear so plausible, even persuasive, because they are usually presented in a manner intended to make them appear orthodox. Regarding these alien ideas, he says, "Either the Catholic Church remains constant in her fundamental articles of faith, over the centuries, or she is no longer the Church founded by Christ."

According to Fr. Hardon, we are in a crises of faith and that we need champions of the Faith to rescue us from the plight we are in. In this regard, he says:

No one who knows what the situation is, doubts that the Catholic Church is going through a veritable emergency of faith. What is an emergency but a time for urgent decisions, that is discriminating judgment? What leaders of the Church need to do today is not be shaken by the storm that is raging all around them, but to hold on literally for dear life to what Christ has revealed, to what has been defended for us by the champions of orthodoxy like Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great, lived out before us by saints and mystics like Benedict, Francis and Ignatius Loyola, like Clare, Margaret Mary and Teresa, like Elizabeth Seton and Thomas More, and experienced by us in whatever span of life we have so far lived.

And we might add champions of the Faith for our time, such as St. Padre Pio, Blessed Mother Teresa, Mother Angelica, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and we would add Fr. John Hardon.

How does Fr. Hardon apply the idea of a crisis of Faith and alien ideas to the Eucharist? He says that the seat of the crisis in the Roman Catholic Church is the widespread loss of faith in the Real Presence. He delivered a talk at a conference several years ago where he started by discussing an encyclical Pope Paul VI had written over thirty years previous on the Real Presence entitled *Mysterium Fidei*, in English *Mystery of Faith*. Fr. Hardon said that a crisis of faith in the Eucharist among once believing Catholics had gotten so serious that Pope Paul VI published his encyclical on the Real Presence during the sessions of Vatican Council II. He tells us that the Pope was concerned that “liturgical innovations, which the council had introduced, would be positively harmful to the Catholic Church unless the faithful firmly believed and clearly understood the mystery of faith which is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.” He quotes Pope Paul VI as writing:

The fundamental truth about the Eucharist that Christ revealed was what he taught, that which is described in the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel. Jesus had just fed the multitude, thousands, with five loaves and two fishes. Then He told the multitude that they must be fed not only in body but also and mainly in soul. And that is why He would give His followers nothing less than His own body to eat and blood to drink. Having said this, not only to casual on lookers but many, the apostles told us, many of His own disciples said to one another, “This is intolerable language. Who can believe it?”

Commenting on the Pope's statement, Fr. Hardon says, “That sixth chapter of St. John was not only history it was prophecy. This has been the story of the mystery of the Real Presence for the last almost two thousand years. And this is the situation today, except that now millions of once professed Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence.” Elsewhere he says, “It is the sixth Chapter of Saint John's Gospel but now on a global scale.” What he is talking about is Jesus' “Bread of Life” sermon found in the 6th Chapter of St. John's Gospel. We discuss this chapter below.

Fr. Hardon tells us that Pope Paul VI uses two words to summarize this Eucharist Crisis: they are the errors of transignification and transfinalization.

Transignification: This view means that when the consecration at Mass is performed, only a change of meaning or significance of the bread and wine takes place; their substances do not change. This view is contrary to the Catholic view of transubstantiation, which states that at the words of consecration the substances of bread and wine are literally transformed into the substances of the Body and Blood of Christ. In transignification, the consecrated elements are said to signify all that Christians associate with the Last Supper. Consequently, the bread and wine acquire a higher meaning than merely food for the body, but they simply remain bread and wine. In other words, the meaning of the bread and wine changes, but not the matter or substance. Something that had served a profane use now in the words of Karl Rahner “becomes the dwelling place and the symbol of Christ who is present and gives Himself to His own.” Fr. Hardon claims that through various theologians, such as Rahner, the idea of transignification has permeated the Eucharistic theology of whole nations. The theory of transignification was

condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), if it is understood as denying transubstantiation.

Transfinalization: This view means that the purpose or finality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is changed by the words of consecration, but what remains after the consecration is still bread and wine. In other words, the bread and wine now serve a new function as sacred elements that arouse the faith of the people in Christ's redemptive love. As one can readily see, the meaning of transignification and transfinalization are similar, except that in each case, the bread and wine remain bread and wine after the consecration.

The main thing to remember about both of these views is there is no change in their being bread and wine at the consecration—they merely take on a new meaning. Edward Schillebeeckx, the leading proponent of transfinalization tells us that the purpose of the Eucharistic elements is simply to make Christ's presence more intimate. Proponents of both views speak of the Real Presence, but their idea of real presence is that Christ is present both before and after the consecration, but in a more intimate way afterwards. Somehow the host mysteriously mediates between the Lord and his church and the individual believer. Essentially this is a Protestant notion of the Eucharist. Like transignification, this theory was condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) if transfinalization is taken to deny the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Consubstantiation: Fr. Hardon states that Consubstantiation is “the belief, contrary to Catholic doctrine, that in the Eucharist the body and blood of Christ coexist with the bread and wine after the Consecration of the Mass. John Wyclif (1324-84) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) professed consubstantiation because they denied transubstantiation.” In other words, at the words of consecration, Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, perhaps only in a spiritual sense, but the substances of bread and wine remain bread and wine.

The consequence of these alien notions among Catholics: Fr. Hardon informs us that these and other alien ideas have caused Catholics to lose their belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, which explains why millions of once professed Catholics no longer genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. He asked, “Who would genuflect before a piece of bread?” Father goes on to say, “Thirty years of erroneous teaching about the Real Presence has deeply affected and infected the minds of millions—and I mean that figure—millions of still professed Catholics. Pope John Paul speaks of this dissemination of untruth in seminaries and universities—Holy Father how right you are, how sadly right you are. These ideas have penetrated into the minds of the leaders in the Catholic Church both among the clergy and among the laity and among the erroneous ideas I place at root the teaching about the Real Presence.”

Fr. Hardon concludes by saying, “Believe me there is much more at stake, much more than meets the eye. Everything in the Catholic faith depends on whether Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist as the Real Presence. Why do we say this? Because the Real Presence implies and includes the teaching that Christ ordained the Apostles at the Last Supper. He gave them the

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priestly power to change bread and wine into His own flesh and blood.” As we discuss in our essay on the Nicene Creed, the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Faith, and anything that calls into questions its efficacy is detrimental to the Faith.

Metaphysics of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

Fr. Hardon defines metaphysics in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “The science of being, as being; or of the absolutely first principles of being. Also called ontology, first philosophy, the philosophy of being, the philosophy of first causes, wisdom.” The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that metaphysics is “the study of the meaning, structure, and principles of whatever is and inasmuch as it is or exists. In its material object, or the number of things it studies, metaphysics is all inclusive, extending to everything and every aspect of whatever is or can exist, whether of a material, sensible, physical nature or of a higher, nonmaterial nature” Our emphases here is on the philosophy of first causes; i.e., what causes things to be or to exist.

Substance and accident: All being is a composite of substance and accident. Fr. Hardon’s *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines substance as “A being whose essence requires that it exist in itself. Fr. O’Donnell says in *Hooked On Philosophy: Thomas Aquinas Made Easy* that “Substance is whatever is a natural kind of thing and exists in its own right.” Examples are rocks, trees, animals, etc., because they exist in their own right; they do not exist in something else.

On the other hand, substances always possess accidents, which the essence is to exist in another substance, rather than in itself. Fr. Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that accidents are “Things whose essence naturally requires that they exist in another being. Accidents are also called the appearances, species, or properties of a thing. These may be either physical, such as quantity, or modal, such as size or shape. Supernaturally, accidents can exist, in the absence of their natural substance, as happens with the physical properties of bread and wine after Eucharistic consecration.” Accidents are qualities that can’t exist in themselves, but require substances for their existence. In other words, accidents can exist only in substances, they do not exist in themselves. Substance and accidents make up Aristotle’s ten categories of being, one being substance and the other nine accidents, such as quantity, quality, relation, action, place, time, etc. In our present case we are considering the substances of bread and wine, which exist in themselves, and possess accidental qualities like color, shape, texture, taste, odor, etc.

Act and potency: Substances possess both actuality (act) and potentiality (potency). Once something comes into existence, i.e. it actually exists, it is said to be in a state of act or actuality. Fr. Hardon defines “act” in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “That which is not potential, i.e., that which is not in potency but in act. The existent as distinct from the merely possible.” He defines “potency as “The capacity of a being to be, to act, or to receive.” Act is what a thing is right now; what it actually is. It is a state of real existence rather than possibility. Potency is then what it possibly (potentially) can become. A person is a person in act, but he or she is potentially many things: good or bad; physically weak or strong; a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a police officer.

To apply this to the Eucharist, flour is a substance that actually exist or has being. However, it also possesses potency or potential to become many different things (beings), including bread. The same is true of grapes; they can be made (formed into one of several things, including wine.

When flour takes on the form of bread, it is transformed into the substance of bread and not something else, like spaghetti. When grapes are made into wine, they assume a new form that makes them wine and not something else, like raisins. They no longer have the form of flour or grapes. After the transformations (see the word form in the preceding word) of flour into bread and grapes into wine, they actually (in act) are the substances of bread and wine, each with its new potentialities (potencies). The potential that we are about to consider is the potential of the substances of bread and wine to be transformed (transubstantiated) into the Body and Blood of Christ. In the case of the Eucharist, the formal cause or activation principle is the words of consecration that forms the substances of bread and wine into the substances of Christ's Body and Blood.

In summary, the material cause is that of which a thing is made, which in our case the matter is the bread and wine. The formal cause is its essence or nature, i.e., that which makes it what it is. The formal cause in the Eucharist is the words of consecration. The efficient cause is that by which it comes into being; and the final cause is its end or purpose, or that for which it exists. Now we are ready to consider the other elements in addition to matter and form that are necessary to transforming bread and wine into the substances of his Body and Blood. But before we do that, we must look at what causes things to be, to exist.

Causes of being: The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines cause as "A principle from which something originates with consequent dependence. It is a being that in some way directly affects the being or change of something else. It is that which gives existence in some way to another or is the reason for the existence of another being." In other words, a cause is something, such as a person or condition that is responsible for producing an effect or consequence. Putting this in metaphysical terms, cause moves something from potency to act.

For centuries there existed a method of ascertaining the cause of things or beings, which accounted for all aspects of their existence. It was first the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle who formulated the method and it was refined in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics or Schoolmen, especially St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.

In the history of philosophy numerous explanations have been given to account for causation. The most famous and lasting of these was Aristotle's in the fourth century B.C. He identified four elements to completely account for the cause of something:

1. **Material Cause:** The material cause or matter is the basic stuff out of which a thing is made. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. The matter or material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and any other building materials used in its construction. These things are necessary to build a house, because it couldn't exist without them. In the section dealing with Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy in this website, we distinguish between first or prime matter and secondary matter.

2. **Formal Cause:** The formal cause is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled; it is the pattern or essence determining the creation of a thing; it is that which makes something what it is and not something else; it is that which makes something one thing and not another. Form is more than the shape of something, because things with the same nature can take many different shapes. All human beings have the same essence or nature, but they come in many different shapes. Thus, the blueprints are the formal cause of the house we are describing. They are an essential part of this particular house, because otherwise there would exist nothing more than piles of materials. I once helped a brother of mine frame his house. There was nothing but several semi-trailer loads of materials lying on the ground when we started. He built his home in accordance with a particular set of blueprints. The materials had the capacity to be used to build many different other types of houses, or even things other than houses.
3. **Efficient Cause:** The efficient cause is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing the matter and form together in the production of a thing, in the case that we have been using, our particular house; it is the agent that imposed this form on that matter; it is the force or agent producing an effect. In our section of this website Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy we describe efficient cause as that which moves matter from potency to act; matter that is potentially something that actually becomes something. Efficient cause is what we ordinarily think of as cause; that which has a cause and effect relationship. A cause is that which is responsible for an effect or change in something. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blue-prints for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it became without their contribution.
4. **Final Cause:** Lastly, the final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists; so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings; in my brother's case, his wife and family. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Philosophers also identify a First Cause defined in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as “God . . . the first cause of all things, because he is the first in the series of all other causes. Also, God as immediately operating in all finite causality, as the underlying cause on which all other causes constantly depend for their activity.”

Aristotle believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality.

To illustrate further, let's use a chair as an example. The material cause of a particular chair is

the wood out of which it is made, the formal cause is the shape into which it was fashioned, the efficient cause is the carpenter by whom the chair was made, and the final cause is the sitting for the sake of which it was designed.

The Four Causes applied to the sacraments

Scholastic theory of causation has been used to explain the Sacraments. Most older Catholics will have heard of the terms matter and form used when applied to the Sacraments. These terms are an application of Aristotelian or Scholastic philosophy to the Sacraments. The material cause or matter of a sacrament is the materials used to perform the sacrament. The formal cause or form is the actualizing principle of the sacrament.

For example, water is the matter or material cause of the Sacrament of Baptism. Theologians have distinguished between, remote and proximate matter. For example, the remote matter of Baptism is water and the proximate matter is the pouring of (or immersion in) water. The remote matter of the anointing of the sick is the oil of olives blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter is the application of the oil. The remote matter of Confirmation is holy chrism, which is a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter consists in the imposition of hands and anointing with chrism.

The form of the Sacrament of Baptism, the actualizing principle, is the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus the Trinity is the efficient cause of the effects of the Sacrament. The final cause of the Sacrament of Baptism is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered. For example, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity washes away Original Sin and infuses Sanctifying Grace at Baptism. The final cause is to make the baptized person a child of God the Father, and a brother or sister of his son Jesus as well as an heir to Heaven.

Penance differs somewhat from the other Sacraments in that while the matter of the other Sacraments is a thing of some kind, water, chrism, etc., the matter of the Sacrament of Penance is the acts of the penitent, such as contrition, confession and satisfaction. The Council of Trent declared that "sins which are destroyed by Penance may properly be called the matter of Penance." The form, the actualizing principle of the sacrament is the words, "I absolve you from your sins. . ." The efficient cause of the Sacrament is Jesus Christ who speaks through his priest acting in his person (*in persona Christi*). The final cause of the Sacrament is to restore the penitent once again to God's friendship and to provide the graces necessary to maintaining that friendship. Furthermore, the Council of Trent stated that "since the Sacraments signify what they effect, the words, I absolve thee, signify that remission of sin is effected by the administration of this Sacrament." We could apply this same reasoning to all of the Sacraments.

During the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, a different perspective began to develop in regard to causation. With the development of scientific interest in nature, cause was usually conceived merely as an object, a thing that could be perceived with the senses, often with the aid

of a microscope or telescope. Today, causation is generally interpreted as energy or action, whether or not connected with matter, which is a much narrower perspective. This narrower perspective was to have serious implications for education.

Modern science, for the most part, eliminated formal and final causation from the formula of causation and generally has included only material and efficient causes. Material causes or matter can be perceived with the senses and only things that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched are considered real. Final causes are teleological (from the Greek *telos*) which means an ultimate end of something, which science claims we can't know, because it isn't something that can be perceived by the senses. Edward Feser has written brilliantly on this subject in his book *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*. We explain why eliminating formal and final causes in change shuts man off from ascending to God by rational means in our section on *Reasons to Believe: Catholic Apologetics and Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy*. This type of thinking has led to positivism and scientism.

Positivism is a philosophy or ideology that bases all knowledge on perception, and denies the validity of intuition or revelation as valid methods of discovering reality or truth. Positivism maintains that metaphysical questions are unanswerable and that the only knowledge is scientific knowledge. It is often coupled with the conception of progress or improvement as necessary and brought forth by technological development.

Scientism is a belief that scientific knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge and that scientific argument should always be given more weight than knowledge derived by other methods. This view holds that the validity of all fields of inquiry should be evaluated by standard scientific methods of investigation. To illustrate my point; Once when I was describing the miracles at Lourdes and other places to a skeptical cousin of mine, who happens to be a very prominent scientist, and he claimed that science would one day find a natural answer to these phenomena. The attitude that science is the only valid method of searching for the truth and that anything that is not observable for all practical purposes does not exist, and that the only reality is matter, leads to materialism, subjectivism, relativism, and other ideologies that leaves God out altogether. I believe that this is the dominant philosophy or ideology that permeates our educational system. Just because something can't be put under a microscope or telescope does not mean that it doesn't exist or that it isn't real.

At John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until retirement, we taught the same biology, physics, and chemistry that are taught in the public schools. The difference is we were free to consider all of the elements in the causes of things, and not just that which is perceivable. There we were free to consider the philosophical and theological aspects of causation as well as the perceivable or empirical, that is, we considered formal and final causation as well as material and efficient causation. But even at John Paul we left most of the philosophy and theology to the religion and humanities courses. A well educated person needs religious and humanities courses as well as the science and technology courses to get a complete understanding of reality or truth.

The four causes applied to the Eucharist

The Matter of the Eucharist: Recall that matter is the “stuff” out of which things (beings) are made. What matter becomes depends on the form it assumes or takes on. Before matter receives a form, it is called first or prime matter. The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines prime matter as “The fundamental, potential principle of all bodily substances. It is pure passive potency and therefore the completely undetermined basic material of the physical universe; the substratum of all material things remaining unchanged in every physical change that occurs in space and time. The principle matter of the Eucharist before the consecration is the bread and wine.

The Form of the Eucharist: Above in this essay, we said that the matter or material cause of a sacrament is the material used to perform the sacrament. The formal cause or form is the actualizing principle of the sacrament; it is that which makes it what it is and not something else; it defines it. In the case of the Eucharist, the form is the words of consecration. But as we shall see below, these two elements are not the complete explanation of the causes of being (existence or things) or a change in being, which in the case of the Eucharist is the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We must also account for efficient and final causes. Everything has a sufficient reason, or a cause, for being what it is.

Also recall that forms are “what organizes matter and make it intelligible.” They are “the source of order, unity, and identity of objects.” Forms are the organizing principle that makes things “what” they are and not something else. It organizes matter into something. It is the plan, pattern, or blueprint from which things are assembled. The substantial form of a substance consists of its essential properties, the properties that its matter needs in order to be the kind of substance that it is. When matter assumes or takes on a form, the composite (matter and form together) produces a substance. The thing to remember is that neither matter nor form exists by itself. By themselves they are simply concepts in our minds; they are simply abstractions. However, when they combine, they become existing things; they possess being. In order for matter to exist as an independent being or thing, it must possess a form to make it what it is. The combination of matter and form make an individual being or thing. For example, flour and grapes will not become bread or wine without the organizing principle that forms them into these substances.

Bread is composed of flour, which is a substance with accidental qualities of odor, taste, texture, color, shape, and the like. The flour could have been made (formed) into hundreds of other substances instead of bread, such as spaghetti, vermicelli, spaggetini, macaroni, cookies, cakes, pies, pasta, or dozens of others. Wine is made from grapes, which could have been made (formed) into substances other than wine, such as raisins, grape juice, etc. When flour is formed into bread and grapes into wine, the substances of wheat and grapes undergo substantial changes, that is, they become new or different substances. They could also undergo accidental changes if the qualities change as well, changes such as color, shape, texture, and the like. Matter becomes a substance, (a being or thing)—whose nature it is to exist in and for itself and not in another—when it combines with form.

Efficient Cause of the Eucharist: The change in substances is explained by something moving from potency to act. The bread and wine are each composed of act and potency; the bread is actually bread but has the potential to be transformed into the Body of Christ, and the wine is actually wine, but has the potential to be transformed into Christ's Blood. The cause of a change of this type requires an agent outside of itself, what is called the efficient cause. The transforming agent or efficient cause in this case is the priest acting on behalf of Christ, who is the primary cause of the transformation. Christ—the High Priest—speaks the words of consecration through his instrument, the priest, who is an *Alter Christus*, another Christ. When the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, “This is my body,” “This is the chalice of my blood,” the substances of bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity.

Final Cause of the Eucharist: The final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists. A philosopher says that according to Aristotle “[The final cause] is that for the sake of which motion happens. It is the end or purpose for which the motion takes place.” Fr. Hardon defines final cause as “The end or purpose that an intelligent being has in performing an action or producing an effect.” Another scholar states that, “The final cause is the fourth, extrinsic principle of process, giving the reason why efficient causes go into action, whether consciously, in the case of conscious and intelligent agents, or unconsciously, when the final cause is in the mind of him who administers providentially the process of changes in the cosmos.” The final cause of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered, which is to provide food and nourishment for the soul in the form of God's grace, which in the case of sanctifying grace is his life within us.

Aristotle rightly believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality, which in this case is the reality of the Eucharist. Applying Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics to the Eucharist provides us with a much deeper understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

St. Thomas considered final causation to be the “cause of causes”; that is, the other three causes are directed toward the final cause. In this regard, Fr. Maurice De Wulf tells us in his *The Philosophical System of Thomas Aquinas* that “The hierarchical order that exists between the four causes results from their nature. Finality attracts (consciously or not) and persuades a being to exercise its activities. Efficient causality tends towards the end in view, and the result of action is a new union of matter and form. When an artist undertakes to chisel a statue, it is his purpose which directs the designs, the choice of the material, the chiseling itself. The first intention of the artist is the last thing to be realized. It is not otherwise with the aim of nature: in the order of intention the final cause comes first; but in the order of execution it is the last to be realized.” In other words, the first three causes are directed toward the final cause, otherwise they would have no purpose in existing. The priest speaks the words of consecration (the

proximate formal cause) to effect a change (the efficient cause) in the matter of bread and wine (the material cause) into Christ's Body and Blood (the final cause). The first three causes would not have existed unless the priest had the intention or goal of making Christ present on the altar. The ultimate purpose of the consecration is to make Christ's suffering and death on the cross and to provide grace for the spiritual nourishment for our souls.

The Consecration: During the consecration at Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, "This is my body," This is the chalice of my blood." At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become, (are transformed into) the substances of Jesus' Body and Blood, even though the accidents or species appear to be bread and wine. By accidents is meant that the Body and Blood still look like, smell like, feel like, and taste like bread and wine, but truly are the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fulfills the promise of Jesus' "Bread of Life" or "Eucharistic" sermon in John 6.

Fr. Hardon explains transubstantiation for us this way in *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

The complete change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood by a validly ordained priest during the consecration at Mass, so that only the accidents (also called appearances or species) of bread and wine remain. While the faith behind the term itself was already believed in apostolic times, the term itself was a later development. With the Eastern Fathers before the sixth century, the favored expression was *meta-ousiosis*, 'change of being'; the Latin tradition coined the word *transubstantiatio*, 'change of substance,' which was incorporated into the creed of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Council of Trent, in defining the 'wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the wine into the blood' of Christ, added 'which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation' (Denzinger 1652). After transubstantiation, the accidents of bread and wine do not inhere in any subject or substance whatever. Yet they are not make-believe they are sustained in existence by divine power." (Etym. Latin *trans-*, so as to change + *substantia*, substance: *transubstantio*, change of substance.).

Fr. Hardon says, "They are not mere appearances as though these physical properties were unreal. But they are appearances because after the consecration they lack any substance that underlies them or in which they inhere."

Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine—the double consecration—symbolizes the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and participants at Mass are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalene, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels, and the congregation. The *Catechism* says about the sacrificial aspect of the Mass, "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' (No. 1365).

The Last Supper and Calvary are made present during the celebration. It is important to stress though that Jesus does not die at every Mass; the one time he died 2000 years ago is made present on the altar, so we can participate in the event that earned for us our salvation.

Holy Communion: Jesus said in his Bread of Life sermon, that "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Holy Communion is the sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Just as bread and wine are food and nourishment for the body, the Body and Blood of Christ are food and nourishment for the soul. Although the consecrated Bread is truly the Body of Christ, and the consecrated wine is truly his Blood, Jesus is fully present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in both consecrated substances. Therefore, when we receive either the consecrated bread or the consecrated wine, we are receiving the complete Jesus, because in reality he can never be separated from either in life. Of course, we can explain the Eucharist only to a point using reason, because it is a great mystery far beyond our comprehension until we see Jesus face to face in Heaven.

Rules Governing Church Attendance

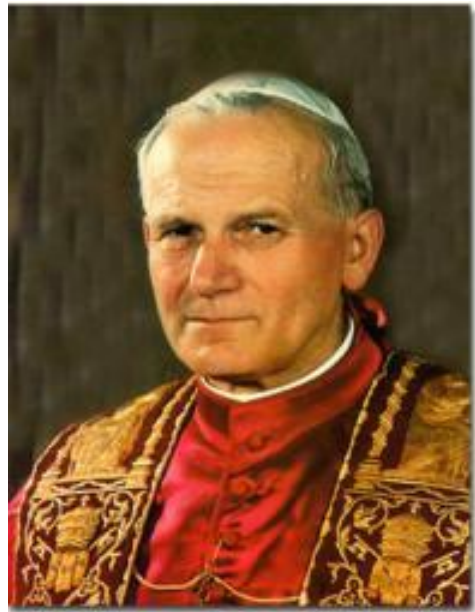
Many Catholics have come to believe that Mass attendance is no longer obligatory, but this is simply not the case. Even though Mass attendance has significantly declined over the last forty years, Catholics are still obligated to attend Sunday Mass under pain of mortal sin. Proof of this requirement can be found in several places.

- **The Holy Bible:** First and foremost the Holy Bible says that we must attend Church on Sunday. The Third Commandments tells us to “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.” The 1913 Edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says of the Ten Commandments, “The Ten Commandments are precepts bearing on the fundamental obligations of religion and morality and embodying the revealed expression of the Creator's will in relation to man's whole duty to God and to his fellow-creatures. They are found twice recorded in the Pentateuch, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, but are given in an abridged form in the catechisms. Written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, this Divine code was received from the Almighty by Moses amid the thunders of Mount Sinai, and by him made the ground-work of the Mosaic Law. Christ resumed these Commandments in the double precept of charity--love of God and of the neighbour; He proclaimed them as binding under the New Law in Matthew 19 and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5).”
- **Vatican Council II:** Vatican Council II recalled the constant teaching on Sunday obligation in the following words: “On this day Christ's faithful must gather together, so that, by hearing the word of God and taking part in the eucharist, they may call to mind the passion, resurrection, and glorification of the Lord Jesus and may thank God, who has begotten them again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). *Sacrosanctum Concilium* , art. 106: DOL 1, no. 106.
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church:** In this regard, the *Catechism* states, “The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church” (No. 2177). Elsewhere the *Catechism* says, “The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: ‘On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.’ The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day” (No. 2180).
- **Code of Canon Law:** The *Code* says that “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass; they are also to abstain from those labors and business concerns which impede the worship to be rendered to God, the joy which is proper to the Lord's Day, or the proper relaxation of mind and body. (*Canon 1247 - Code of Canon Law*).

- **Precepts of the Church:** The First Precept says that “You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.” Quoting from Canon Law No. 49 “A singular precept is a decree which directly and legitimately enjoins a specific person or persons to do or omit something, especially in order to urge the observance of law.” The *Catechism* says that “precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor” (No. 2041).
- **Other Sources:** Numerous saints, Doctors of the Church, great theologians, and Popes down through the ages have reminded us of our obligation to keep holy the Lord’s Day. I have heard Monsignor Moran say in numerous sermons over the years, “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day and it will keep you holy.” Countless times we Catholics have been told that missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin. Pope Innocent XI decreed on March 4, 1679 that they are heretics who deny that missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin.
- ***Dies Domini*:** Although there are many encyclicals, apostolic letters, and other Church documents reminding us of our obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, the latest that I am aware of is John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (The Day of the Lord).

John Paul II's Theological Foundations for Mass Participation

This Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* contains a lot of information for us in regard to keeping holy the Lord's Day. The only portion of the letter we are going to consider is the one in which he discusses the theological foundations for keeping holy the Lord's Day, Chapters II and III. After carefully outlining in Chapter I what the Church has said from the beginning about keeping holy the Lord's Day and how Sunday Mass attendance has declined so much over the past several decades, the Pope provides the theological reasons why we should keep holy the Lord's Day.



Dies Domini is an apostolic letter promulgated by Pope John Paul II on July 30, 1998. In this letter the, Pope encourages the Catholic population to 'rediscover the meaning' behind keeping the Lord's Day holy. He explains the meaning of the Sunday obligation in the light of Christian tradition. To celebrate Sunday is to make present the graces of the Paschal mystery, which is the climax of salvation history:

- **The Lord's Day begins with in the Genesis story:** John Paul begins with the Genesis story of the creation. He says in this regard, "In order to grasp fully the meaning of Sunday, therefore, we must re-read the great story of creation and deepen our understanding of the theology of the "Sabbath". Then he quotes *Genesis* 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" followed by *Genesis* 2:2, "On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done."
- **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy:** Pope John Paul then quotes *Genesis* 2:3, "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." He says, "In the first place, therefore, Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, 'the Lord's Day.'"
- **The Lord's Day is kept holy by remembering:** Quoting the Decalogue or Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus, the Pope tells us to, "Remember the Sabbath day in order to keep it holy" (20:8). He says that the inspired text goes on to give the reason for this, "recalling as it does the work of God: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.'"

The Pope asked, "What is it we are to remember"? He answers, "It is a call to awaken remembrance of the grand and fundamental work of God which is creation, a remembrance which must inspire the entire religious life of man and then fill the day on which man is called to *rest*. Rest therefore acquires a sacred value: the faithful are called to rest

not only *as* God rested, but to rest *in* the Lord, bringing the entire creation to him, in praise and thanksgiving, intimate as a child and friendly as a spouse.”

- **The Lord's Day is the weekly Easter:** In this section, John Paul tells us why we celebrate on Sunday, the reason being “the venerable Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we do so not only at Easter but also at each turning of the week.” This is why Sunday is the weekly Easter. The Pope goes on to say, “In the light of this constant and universal tradition, it is clear that, although the Lord's Day is rooted in the very work of creation and even more in the mystery of the biblical ‘rest’ of God, it is nonetheless to the Resurrection of Christ that we must look in order to understand fully the Lord's Day. This is what the Christian Sunday does, leading the faithful each week to ponder and live the event of Easter, true source of the world's salvation.”
- **The Lord's Day is the day of the new creation:** To demonstrate that the Lord's Day is the day of a new creation, the Pope compares the Christian Sunday with the Old Testament vision of the Sabbath. He says that this “prompted theological insights of great interest.” He states that “Christian thought spontaneously linked the Resurrection, which took place on ‘the first day of the week’, with the first day of that cosmic week (*Genesis* 1:1 - 2:4) which shapes the creation story in the Book of Genesis: the day of the creation of light (1:3-5). This link invited an understanding of the Resurrection as the beginning of a new creation, the first fruits of which is the glorious Christ, ‘the first born of all creation’ (*Colossians* 1:15) and the first born from the dead” (*Colossians* 1:18).

John Paul ties the new creation to baptism when he says, “In effect, Sunday is the day above all other days which summons Christians to remember the salvation which was given to them in baptism and which has made them new in Christ. ‘You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead’” (*Colossians* 2:12; cf. *Romans* 6:4-6).

- **The Lord's Day is the day of Christ-Light:** In this regard, the Pope states, “Wise pastoral intuition suggested to the Church the christianization of the notion of Sunday as ‘the day of the sun’, which was the Roman name for the day and which is retained in some modern languages. This was in order to draw the faithful away from the seduction of cults which worshipped the sun, and to direct the celebration of the day to Christ, humanity's true sun.” Recall that Jesus said that he is the light of the world (See especially *John* 9:5).
- **The Lord's Day is the day of the gift of the Spirit:** In this section, the Pope says that “The outpouring of the Spirit was the great gift of the Risen Lord to his disciples on Easter Sunday.” Furthermore, “Sunday, the day of light, could also be called the day of ‘fire’, in reference to the Holy Spirit. The light of Christ is intimately linked to the ‘fire’ of the Spirit, and the two images together reveal the meaning of the Christian Sunday.” Then John Paul tells how the Jesus appeared to the Apostles in the Upper Room on the Easter evening. Then Jesus told them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of

any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (*John* 20:22-23). Moreover, it was on a Sunday fifty days after the Resurrection that the Spirit descended in power, as 'a mighty wind' and 'fire' (*Acts* 2:2-3), upon the Apostles gathered with Mary." The Pope says, "Pentecost is not only the founding event of the Church, but is also the mystery which forever gives life to the Church."

- **The Lord's Day is the day of faith:** Sunday is in the Pope's words "the supreme *day of faith*." He says, "It is the day when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the Church's living 'memory' (cf. *John* 14:26), the first appearance of the Risen Lord becomes an event renewed in the 'today' of each of Christ's disciples. Gathered in his presence in the Sunday assembly, believers sense themselves called like the Apostle Thomas: 'Put your finger here, and see my hands. Put out your hand, and place it in my side. Doubt no longer, but believe' (*John* 20:27). Yes, Sunday is the day of faith. This is stressed by the fact that the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy, like the liturgy of other solemnities, includes the Profession of Faith. Recited or sung, the Creed declares the baptismal and Paschal character of Sunday, making it the day on which in a special way the baptized renew their adherence to Christ and his Gospel in a rekindled awareness of their baptismal promises." In other words, every time we go to Mass we renew our baptismal vows and our covenant with the Lord.
- **The Lord's Day is an indispensable day!** John Paul concludes this chapter by saying, "It is clear then why, even in our own difficult times, the identity of this day must be protected and above all must be lived in all its depth."

The Eucharistic Assembly

Upon completing his discussion of the theological foundation or fundamentals of keeping holy the Lord's Day, John Paul goes on in Chapter III to outline and describe the Eucharistic Assembly, which is the heart of Sunday. He calls this chapter *Dies Ecclesiae*, the *Day of the Church*. As with Chapter II, there are several themes in Chapter III.

- **The Risen Lord is present in the Eucharistic Assembly:** About the Lord's presence, the Pope says, "At Sunday Mass, Christians relive with particular intensity the experience of the Apostles on the evening of Easter when the Risen Lord appeared to them as they were gathered together (cf. *John* 20:19). In a sense, the People of God of all times were present in that small nucleus of disciples, the first fruits of the Church." Elsewhere in this section he says, "As the day of Resurrection, Sunday is not only the remembrance of a past event: it is a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people."
- **The Eucharistic Assembly is a community of believers:** John Paul tells us in this section that the community aspect of the Eucharistic Assembly should particularly be stressed at the Sunday Mass. Of this he says, "among the many activities of a parish,

none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist . . . For Christian families, the Sunday assembly is one of the most outstanding expressions of their identity and their 'ministry' as 'domestic churches', when parents share with their children at the one Table of the word and of the Bread of Life."

- **The Eucharistic Assembly is a Pilgrim People:** In this regard, the Pope states, "As the Church journeys through time, the reference to Christ's Resurrection and the weekly recurrence of this solemn memorial help to remind us of *the pilgrim and eschatological character of the People of God*. Sunday after Sunday the Church moves towards the final 'Lord's Day', that Sunday which knows no end. The expectation of Christ's coming is inscribed in the very mystery of the Church and is evidenced in every Eucharistic celebration."
- **The Mass Renews the Covenant:** Regarding this matter, the Pope states, "It should also be borne in mind that *the liturgical proclamation of the word of God*, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as *a dialogue between God and his People*, a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated. On their part, the People of God are drawn to respond to this dialogue of love by giving thanks and praise, also by demonstrating their fidelity to the task of continual "conversion". The Sunday assembly commits us therefore to an inner renewal of our baptismal promises, which are in a sense implicit in the recitation of the Creed, and are an explicit part of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil and whenever Baptism is celebrated during Mass."
- **The Lord's Day is the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist:** The Pope says that whenever Mass is celebrated, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday assembly at the twofold table of the word and of the Bread of Life. He reminds us that the Second Vatican Council said, "The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely joined together that they form a single act of worship."

In regard to the Table of the Word, the Pope says, "The table of the word offers the same understanding of the history of salvation and especially of the Paschal Mystery which the Risen Jesus himself gave to his disciples: it is Christ who speaks, present as he is in his word when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church."

Regarding the Table of the Bread of Life, he says, "At the table of the Bread of Life, the Risen Lord becomes really, substantially and enduringly present through the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection, and the Bread of Life is offered as a pledge of future glory."

- **From Mass to mission:** The word Mass is derived from the Latin *Missio* or mission in English. A mission is defined as a continuing task or responsibility that one is destined or fitted to do or specially called upon to undertake. In the old Latin order of the Mass, the

Tridentine Mass, the priest dismissed the congregation with *Ite, missa est*, meaning go, you are dismissed. In the *Novus Ordo* or New Order of the Mass, the priest dismisses the congregation with, "The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord." The words of dismissal represent Christ's Ascension, when he sent his Apostles to go forth and evangelize the world.

What John Paul has to say about being sent forth is well worth quoting: "Receiving the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ ready themselves to undertake with the strength of the Risen Lord and his Spirit *the tasks which await them in their ordinary life*. For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Like the first witnesses of the Resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called *to evangelize and bear witness* in their daily lives."

- **The Sunday obligation:** Regarding the Sunday obligation, the Pope, says, "Since the Eucharist is the very heart of Sunday, it is clear why, from the earliest centuries, the Pastors of the Church have not ceased to remind the faithful of *the need to take part in the liturgical assembly*." In the early days, the Church didn't need to have requirements for Mass attendance, but the Pope goes on to point out that it was only later when the fervor of the faithful died down that the Church found it necessary to resort to specific canonical precepts requiring attendance.

Today, John Paul tells us that Church members, "live in surroundings which are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times—more frequently in fact—indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message. If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant."

- **Other moments of the Christian Sunday:** The Pope tells us that although the heart of Sunday is the Mass, we have a duty to mark the rest of the day by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work. About this he states, "This commits each of Christ's disciples to shape the other moments of the day—those outside the liturgical context: family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation—in such a way that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life." To fill the rest of the day, John Paul suggests that families spend time in a more intense experience of faith, such as family prayer or visits to near-by shrines.
- **Sunday is a day of solidarity:** By solidarity the Pope means the performance of works of mercy. About this matter he declares, "The Eucharist is an event and programme of true brotherhood. From the Sunday Mass there flows a tide of charity destined to spread into the whole life of the faithful, beginning by inspiring the very way in which they live the rest of Sunday. If Sunday is a day of joy, Christians should declare by

their actual behaviour that we cannot be happy 'on our own'. They look around to find people who may need their help. It may be that in their neighbourhood or among those they know there are sick people, elderly people, children or immigrants who precisely on Sundays feel more keenly their isolation, needs and suffering. It is true that commitment to these people cannot be restricted to occasional Sunday gestures. But presuming a wider sense of commitment, why not make the Lord's Day a more intense time of sharing, encouraging all the inventiveness of which Christian charity is capable? Inviting to a meal people who are alone, visiting the sick, providing food for needy families, spending a few hours in voluntary work and acts of solidarity: these would certainly be ways of bringing into people's lives the love of Christ received at the Eucharistic table. Lived in this way, not only the Sunday Eucharist but the whole of Sunday becomes a great school of charity, justice and peace.

- **Sunday is the day of rest:** We will conclude our discussion of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* by considering what he says about Sunday as a day of rest. On this subject he says, "The alternation between work and rest, built into human nature, is willed by God himself, as appears in the creation story in the Book of Genesis (Genesis2:2-3; Exodus20:8-11): rest is something 'sacred', because it is man's way of withdrawing from the sometimes excessively demanding cycle of earthly tasks in order to renew his awareness that everything is the work of God. There is a risk that the prodigious power over creation which God gives to man can lead him to forget that God is the Creator upon whom everything depends. It is all the more urgent to recognize this dependence in our own time, when science and technology have so incredibly increased the power which man exercises through his work . . . Through Sunday rest, daily concerns and tasks can find their proper perspective: the material things about which we worry give way to spiritual values; in a moment of encounter and less pressured exchange, we see the true face of the people with whom we live."

The Pope goes on to say that the beauties of nature can be rediscovered and enjoyed to the full on the Lord's Day. In this regard, he says, "As the day on which man is at peace with God, with himself and with others, Sunday becomes a moment when people can look anew upon the wonders of nature, allowing themselves to be caught up in that marvellous and mysterious harmony which, in the words of Saint Ambrose, weds the many elements of the cosmos in a 'bond of communion and peace' by an inviolable law of concord and love". Men and women then come to a deeper sense, as the Apostle says, "everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim 4:4-5).

We will end this discussion of John Paul's encyclical *Dies Domini* by quoting him at length:

The Mass in fact *truly makes present the sacrifice of the Cross*. Under the species of bread and wine, upon which has been invoked the outpouring of the Spirit who works with absolutely unique power in the words of consecration, Christ offers himself to the Father in the same act of sacrifice by which he offered himself on the Cross. 'In this divine

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sacrifice which is accomplished in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once and for all in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner'. To his sacrifice Christ unites the sacrifice of the Church: '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'. The truth that the whole community shares in Christ's sacrifice is especially evident in the Sunday gathering, which makes it possible to bring to the altar the week that has passed, with all its human burdens.

The Eucharist: The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass



We have established in our discussions that one of the main reasons Mass attendance has declined so much during the past several decades is that many Catholics simply don't know what happens at Mass. Since this appears to be so, let's review what the Mass is and how we can better participate in the celebration. Let me begin by asking what is the Mass?

The Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. He is both the High Priest who offers the victim on the altar of the sacrifice and the victim who is offered. Furthermore Christ's resurrection is celebrated at each Mass. Moreover, the Mass is a covenant, or agreement, between God and man; when we celebrate the Mass, we renew this covenant with God. Since God makes this "New and Everlasting Covenant" with a chosen people—the People of God—we must celebrate the renewal of the covenant as a people. Although God saves one soul at a time, he chooses to save us as members of a community of believers, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

We believe the reason people complain that they don't get anything out of Mass is because they don't understand these truths. If one does not understand the Mass, it can become a mindless routine; it can become boring. Our purpose here is to learn what the Mass is and how to prepare for its celebration as well as how to conduct ourselves during its celebration so we can receive maximum benefit by our participation.

The meaning of sacrament

Since it is so important to our discussion, we will give a more detailed explanation on the meaning of sacrament. A sacrament has been defined as follows: "A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace." An older definition found in the *Baltimore Catechism*, I believe, states: "A sacrament is an outer manifestation of an inner infusion of grace." It is something happening that we can see signifying or pointing to something happening we cannot see, God's grace. For example, while the water is being visibly poured on one's head during baptism while the names of the persons of the Holy Trinity are invoked, the grace that sanctifies is being infused into the soul. Grace is the life of God within us; it is our participation in his life.

From the earliest of times, the Catholic Church has recognized seven sacraments, which are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist are called the sacraments of Christian initiation, because once they are given they render a permanent seal or character upon one's soul. Penance and Anointing are the two sacraments of the sick; one for the spiritually sick or dead, the other for the physically sick. Each sacrament involves the use of a visible external rite, which consists of matter and form. The matter or material cause is the action performed, such as the pouring of water in Baptism, and the form or formal cause is the words spoken by the minister, such as "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Each sacramental rite confers a special spiritual effect and sacramental grace appropriate for each sacrament and occurs at key times during a person's life.

The Catholic sacraments are the principle means that Christ provided for his followers to share in his own divine life, to grow in his life during their stay in this world, and, if necessary, to regain the divine life if it has been lost through sin. They are the principal means of spiritual nourishment; they are the main way we receive God's grace through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They are effective signs of God's grace and the Church administers them as the principal means with which we receive his sanctifying grace and actual graces. Jesus instituted the sacraments, especially the Eucharist or Mass, to help us to be holy like him. In this regard the *Catechism* states, "Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consensus . . . of the Fathers, we profess that "the sacraments of the new law were . . . all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord" (No. 1114).

The meaning of sacrifice

Now that we have discussed the meaning of sacrament, we'll consider a more detailed explanation of the meaning of sacrifice. A sacrifice involves giving something back to God in order to praise and adore him, to thank him for blessings received, to express sorrow for sins and ask for forgiveness, and to ask him for favors. In order for a sacrifice to occur, the following conditions must be satisfied: There must be a priest to offer the sacrifice; there must be a victim to sacrifice or destroy; and there must be an altar on which to sacrifice the victim.

First let's look at the meaning of priest. To better understand the Catholic priesthood we need to go back to the Jewish priests of the Old Testament. The priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigures that of the New Covenant. The *Catechism* says of the Jewish priesthood, "The chosen people was constituted by God as 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance. A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (No. 1539). In another place the *Catechism* states, "Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer, this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish" (No. 1540). It continues, "The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders, a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant" (No. 1541).

The purpose of the sacrifices of the Jewish Temple: Sacrifice was the most important part of the worship of the Israelites. They practiced two types of sacrifice: those that shed the blood of animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, or doves; and unbloody, such as grain or vegetables and fruits. For bloody sacrifices only one's own animals were used. The animal had to be male and could not be unclean, defective, or stolen. The sacrificial ceremony usually consisted of the following steps: (1) the animal was brought to the door of the Tabernacle; (2) the priests placed their hands on the animal to symbolize the transfer of the sins of the offerer to the animal; (3) the animal (victim) was slain; (4) its blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the offerer; (5) the animal's flesh was burned in whole or in part. If only part of the animal was burnt, a sacrificial meal followed in which the offerer showed his friendship with God by eating the victim animal. The procedure of burning the whole animal is called holocaust. The victim animal was not completely burned in sin and guilt offerings; the remaining parts were reserved for the use of the priests. These offerings were made to atone for the offerer's sins. Moreover, only a part of the animal was burned in peace offerings. These were offered to thank God for favors or to ask him for them.

Grain and wine were offered as unbloody sacrifices. The grain was in the form of pure flour, ears of grain, unleavened bread, or cakes. They were often joined to the holocausts and peace offerings, but sometimes they were offered separately.

The priesthood and sacrifices of the Old Covenant (the Old Testament) prefigures the High priesthood of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the Cross of the New and Everlasting Covenant (the New Testament).

Jesus Christ is the High Priest

Jesus Christ is both the High Priest and the victim in the New and Everlasting Covenant. He is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice and the victim who is offered. In regard to this truth, the

Catechism states, “Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the ‘one mediator between God and men.’ The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, ‘priest of God Most High,’ as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique ‘high priest after the order of Melchizedek’; ‘holy, blameless, unstained,’ ‘by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified,’ that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross” (No. 1544). In summary, Jesus Christ is the priest who offers himself as a victim on the altar of Calvary. This is why John the Baptist identified Jesus to Andrew and John at the Jordan River as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” Jesus was to take the place of the Passover lamb.

To continue the *Catechism*, “The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers” (No. 1545).

The ordained priesthood represents Christ *In persona Christi Capitis* (in the person of Christ the Head). When the priest says the words of consecration or absolution, it is truly Christ who is speaking.

The ordained priesthood

We Catholics believe that Christ ordained the first priests at the Last Supper when he told the Apostles to continue doing what he had just done in memory of him. He had just transformed the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. When Jesus, the High Priest, said to continue doing this in memory of him, he was instituting the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which priests are ordained into the priesthood. Of this the *Catechism* says, “The Eucharist that Christ institutes at that moment will be the memorial of his sacrifice. Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it. By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant:” (No. 611). Elsewhere the *Catechism* tells us that “It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice” (No. 1410).

First let's distinguish between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of all believers or the laity. Although the ordained ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ, they differ in their respective roles. The *Catechism* says of the difference, “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching, divine worship, and pastoral governance” (No. 1592).

By ministerial is meant that is a role of ordained priests to minister to the spiritual needs of their congregations. The *Catechism* says of this role, "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service. It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a 'sacred power' which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him" (*Catechism*, No. 1551).

Also the *Catechism* says that the ordained priesthood is sacerdotal. This means that ordained priests administer the sacraments as a representative of Jesus Christ. The *Catechism* says of this matter, "The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ—Head of the Church—before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice" (*Catechism*, No. 1552). What this means is only the ordained priest can represent Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in his name in the confessional.

The Priesthood of the laity or all believers

All of us share in Jesus' priesthood in some manner. God had promised Moses as part of his covenant with the Israelites, "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This priesthood has been continued in the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ with the People of God—the Catholic Church. The Priesthood of the Laity is sometimes referred to as the Priesthood of All Believers. Regarding the laity's priesthood, the *Catechism* states, "Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church 'a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.' The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood" (No. 1546).

Since the Vatican Council there has been a lot of misunderstanding about what the priesthood of the laity means and an attempt to blur the distinction between the laity and the ordained priesthood.

The priestly role of the laity: The layperson can perform his or her priestly role in many ways. The central idea is that they mainly carry out their role in the world, rather than in a strictly sacerdotal role in the Church. Simply by performing well one's vocation as husband, wife, child, worker, etc., one bears witness to the Christian Faith. Performing some of the many ministries open to the laity, such as catechist, server, reader, commentator, cantor, choir member, and other liturgical functions as well as various other parish ministries is another way of witnessing our faith. Participating in social service and charitable activities is another priestly role.

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Above all, let us not forget the sacrifices we offer to God at Holy Mass. As long as we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of God and the benefit of others, as long as we give of ourselves—time, talent, and treasure—for the love of God and neighbor, we are performing a priestly role. When we give our gifts back to God, we destroy them for our own use; we sacrifice them. Our imperfect sacrifices are united to that of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ made present on the altar of Calvary at the consecration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Because our imperfect sacrifices are united to his, they become wholly acceptable to God the Father Almighty.

Moreover, the laity share not only in Christ's priestly role, but also his prophetic and kingly roles as well. By prophet one teaches by example and by counsel or instruction of others. By king one plays leadership roles in the Church and society. Now that we have looked at the components of a sacrifice, let's go on to look at the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Liturgy of the Mass

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Last Supper is the New and Everlasting Covenant sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. It was the first Mass. The *Catechism* states that “By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus’ passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom” (No. 1340).

What precisely happens at Mass? As stated earlier, the Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. A sacrifice is giving something precious back to God in adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, reparation, or petition. For a sacrifice to occur there must be present a priest to offer the sacrifice, a victim in which to offer, and an altar on which to offer the victim. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass Jesus is the High Priest who offers himself as a victim on the altar of Calvary.

The Gospels describe the words of consecration as follows: “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25)). Added to the latter are the words “the blood of the new and everlasting covenant,” which makes reference to the covenant that fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant, which is sealed by the Blood of the Lamb—Jesus Christ—to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere, in return for worshipping him as the one true God and keeping his commandments. What Jesus was in effect doing was making present Calvary before the event had happened. All things are possible with God, of course.

Since it is so important that Catholics understand this, what specifically happens at the consecration? During the consecration at Mass, the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, “This is my body,” This is the chalice of my blood.” At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become the substances of Jesus’ Body and Blood, even though the accidents appear to be bread and wine. By accidents we mean that the Body and Blood still looks like, smells like, feels like, and tastes like bread and wine, but truly is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fulfills the promise of Jesus’ “Bread of Life” sermon in John 6.

Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine—the double consecration—symbol-

izes the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and participants at Mass are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalen, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels, and the congregation.

The *Catechism* says about the sacrificial aspect of the Mass, “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” (No. 1365).

The Last Supper and Calvary are made present during the celebration. It is important to stress though that Jesus does not die at every Mass; the one time he died 2000 years ago is made present on the altar, so we can participate in the event that earned for us our salvation.

The source and summit of our Faith: Vatican Council II has told us that the Eucharist or Mass is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” To directly quote the *Catechism* on this matter, “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life’ ” (No. 1324). It is the source because all of the sacraments, ecclesiastical ministries, and works of the apostolate are tied to the Eucharist and oriented toward it. Everything about our faith is contained in the Mass. There would be no Faith without the Mass, because the Mass makes present the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, which is what our faith is all about. The Vatican II document *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* or in Latin *Lumen Gentium* says, “Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, [the participants] offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with it.” The Irish have an old saying that goes, “It’s the Mass that matters!”

In regard to Mass being the summit of our faith, the *Catechism* states, “The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (No. 1325).

To summarize, the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the heart and soul of sacramental life for it makes present the most important event in the history of the world. The Mass is a commemoration and re-presentation of Christ's one and only sacrifice on the Cross. The Mass brings Heaven to earth and makes present the Last Supper and Calvary. The resurrection of Christ is also celebrated. Furthermore, the doctrine of Transubstantiation teaches that Jesus becomes present at the consecration and that he is really present in the Blessed Sacrament in his full humanity and divinity—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

The Bread of Life Sermon: We mentioned above Jesus’ Bread of Life sermon in found in John 6. The event that follows Jesus’ return to Capernaum after he multiplied the loaves and

fishes and walked on water the day before was a watershed in his public ministry. It is so important to his ministry that we shall quote St. John's gospel at length here:

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always" (John 6:25-34).

Then Jesus answered them saying,

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:35-40). The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

John tells us that the Jews disputed among themselves over Jesus' remarks (John 35-52). Now comes the crucial question: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down

from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.' This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum" (John 6:52-59).

Many, if not most of Jesus' disciples could not accept these "hard" sayings. Was not he speaking of cannibalism? John writes:

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father" (John 6:60-65).

St John concludes this story by saying, "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.' Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?' He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him" (John 6:66-71).

St. John makes it perfectly clear that Jesus meant it literally when he said, "my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." Jesus was so firm on this matter that he let almost all of his disciples leave him. Had he meant what he said only figuratively, he would have stopped them by saying so.

This event effectively ended Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. Because of his "hard saying", he was never able to regain the disciples who had left him or to acquire many more new ones to replace them. After a short trip to Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis and his Transfiguration, soon afterwards he and a little band of about fifty faithful disciples, including his mother, left for Judea where he was to spend the last six months or so of his earthly life.

The Mass is prefigured in the Old Testament

Covenant theology is an integral part of salvation history and teaches that the New Testament (New Covenant) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Old Covenant). In this regard, St. Augustine said something to the effect that the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. Jesus himself clearly made this connection as he walked on the road to Emmaus with two of his followers Easter afternoon (Luke 24:27) and the New Testament makes frequent reference to him fulfilling the scriptures (For example see Matthew 26:56). In fact, Matthew was writing for Jews, so he takes special care to connect the Old Testament with the New, that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old.

The study of the unity of the Old and New Testaments is called typology. A type has been defined as a “real person, place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows [or prefigures] something greater in the New Testament.” The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* says that a type is something in the Old Testament that points to something in the New Testament. It states, “Many of the persons in the Old Testament are ‘types’ of Christ, e.g., Adam (Rom. 5:14); and things in the Old Testament are types of things in the New Testament. Thus, Noah's Ark is a type of the Church (1 Pet. 3:20 ff.). That which a type prefigures is called the antitype. The fact that a particular person or thing is a type can be known only by revelation, either from Holy Scripture or from tradition.”

Prefiguration or foreshadowing hint at something. For example, the Ark of the Covenant of the Old Testament foreshadows (or hints of) the Virgin Mary of the New; the Passover Lamb of the Old Testament prefigures the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” of the New Testament, Jesus Christ; Adam and Eve of the Old Testament are types who hint of the New Adam (Jesus) and the New Eve (Mary) of the New Testament. The Old Testament contains literally hundreds of types that hint of greater things, antitypes, to come in the New Testament. The *Catechism* says in regard to typologies:

The Church, as early as apostolic times, and then constantly in her Tradition, has illuminated the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son” (No. 128). Therefore, “Christians . . . read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord himself. Besides, the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old (*Catechism*, No. 129) . . . Typology indicates the dynamic movement toward the fulfillment of the divine plan when “God [will] be everything to everyone” (*Catechism*, No. 130).

Salvation history ties everything nicely together for us; it relates the Old Testament with the New Testament. The Old Testament tells the story of the creation, fall, and God's selection of a

KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY

Chosen People to prepare mankind for redemption. The New Testament tells the story of the Redemption, which includes the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. You simply cannot know and understand our faith without knowledge of Salvation History.

The exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and their covenant with God are the keys to understanding the Mass. There are several parallels contained in the covenant that Moses and the Chosen People—the Israelites—made with God that prefigures the New and Everlasting Covenant made between the People of God—the Catholic Church—and Jesus Christ, the new Moses. See the table below for several parallels between the covenant that God made with the Israelites, the Old Testament, and the New and Everlasting Covenant or New Testament.

Old Covenant or Testament	New Covenant or Testament
In the old covenant God promises the Chosen People, the Israelites, freedom, land, and prosperity if they worship him as the one true God.	In the “New and Everlasting Covenant” God promises the People of God, the Catholic Church, the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper.
Moses liberates the Chosen People from the bondage of the Egyptians.	Jesus, the new Moses, liberates the People of God from the bondage of Satan and sin.
The old covenant was ratified with the blood of animals.	The new covenant is ratified with the blood of Jesus.
An unblemished lamb is sacrificed on the altar	Jesus, the unblemished lamb of God, is sacrificed on the Cross.
The Israelites are provided with manna to eat to sustain them on their journey through the desert	Christians are provided with the Bread of Life, Holy Communion, to sustain them on their journey through the desert of life.
The Israelites are given the Law of Moses with which to govern their lives.	The People of God are given the Law of Love found in the Sermon on the Mount to govern their lives.
The Israelites are given the Passover meal as a remembrance and a renewal of their covenant with God.	Christians are given the Last Supper, the Eucharist, as a remembrance and a renewal of their covenant with God.
The Chosen People celebrated the Passover in memory of God’s love for them.	Christians celebrate the new Passover, the Eucharist, in memory of God’s love for us in Christ.
God gives the Israelites the Promised Land and Jerusalem for fulfilling the covenant.	God promises a Heavenly Jerusalem for those who love and serve him.

How Jesus said the first Mass

Since the Mass makes present the Last Supper, how did Jesus say the first Mass? The Passover or Seder Meal (or Supper) that Jesus ate with his apostles at the Last Supper in the Upper Room had an established liturgical pattern. Historians tell us that the Passover liturgy in Jesus' time, just as it is today, is based on four stages. The four stages of the Passover Meal revolve around four cups of wine that were consumed by the participants.

We understand that the first stage or preliminary course consisted of a blessing called the "kadush", which was a prayer spoken by the celebrant over the first cup of wine. The celebrant was usually the father or grandfather of the family. This was followed by passing around a dish of green, bitter herbs along with a fruit sauce that was shared by all the participants. The first cup of wine, the kadush cup, was the blessing of the festival day. This was sort of an appetizer rich with symbolic meaning.

When the preliminary course was complete, a second stage began. This consisted of the Passover liturgy, which was taken from Chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus and read by the celebrant. This tells the story of the first Passover in Egypt. Then the youngest participant asked the oldest participant questions about the Exodus. In the case of the Last Supper, the youngest apostle, the beloved disciple John, must have asked Jesus the questions, although Jesus probably was not the oldest participant. Afterwards, the participants sung Psalm 113, known as the "little Hallel". Hallel is Hebrew for praise. Then they shared a second cup of wine. It was during this stage of the Passover Meal that the participants relived the Exodus experience and renewed their covenant with God. They believed that the events of the Exodus were made present for their participation, just as Catholics believe the Last Supper and the events at Calvary are made present on the altar during the celebration of Mass.

At this point the main course began. First, Jesus would have said grace over the unleavened bread. Then roasted lamb, the Passover Lamb, was served along with bitter herbs for the unleavened bread. At this point the celebrant said a prayer. Then Jesus would have said grace over a third cup of wine, which was known as the "cup of blessing". It was probably the third cup that Jesus transformed into his Body and Blood. The cup of blessing was then passed around and shared by all the participants.

The Passover liturgy was culminated with the fourth cup of wine, known as the "cup of consummation". However, it was not passed around immediately. First, the participants were to sing a beautiful song, which was a long hymn consisting of Psalms 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118. This was known as the "great Hallel". Ordinarily when the long hymn was completed, the fourth cup was passed around and shared. This represented the renewal of the covenant with God; it "signaled the communion between God and his people and among the brothers and sisters who are members of God's family." However, the gospel account says that after the third cup was drunk, Jesus said, "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I am entering into the kingdom of God . . . Then they sang the psalms." But instead of saying grace and blessing and consuming the fourth cup, the gospel says they "went out into the night."

To summarize the account of the Passover Meal that Jesus ate with his apostles: there were four cups that represented the structure of the Passover. The first cup of wine, the kadush cup, was the blessing of the festival day. The second cup of wine began at the beginning of the Passover liturgy itself, and involved the singing of psalm 113. The third cup, the cup of blessing, took place at the actual meal of unleavened bread and bitter herbs and roasted Passover lamb. Before the fourth cup was consumed, they sung the great Hillel psalms. Then ordinarily the fourth cup was passed around and consumed by the participants. This was the climax of the Passover Meal. But for some reason Jesus and his apostles skipped the fourth cup.

Why did Jesus skip the fourth cup? Scholars have speculated for centuries why they skipped the fourth cup. Scott Hahn offers a plausible but controversial answer to the question why Jesus and the apostles failed to drink the fourth cup, the cup that ended or consummated the Passover Meal. Recall that Jesus had said during the meal, "I shall not taste of the fruit of the vine again until I enter into the kingdom." Hahn refers to the three times that Jesus fell down to the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cried out to his Father, "Abba, Father . . . All things are possible to Thee. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt (Mark 14:36, RSV). Hahn asks, "What is this cup" about which Jesus was speaking?

In this regard, Hahn says "some scholars suggest that this harkens back to an image used by Isaiah and Jeremiah to speak about the cup of God's wrath that the Messiah, God's suffering servant, must drink." He concedes that there is probably a connection there, but he thinks that it is more likely that the unfinished cup represents a "connection between an interrupted liturgy that had been followed strictly up until the very end and this heartfelt, earnest plea and prayer of our Savior."

Hahn attempts to prove his point by referring to Mark 15:23, which describes Jesus' way to Calvary. Some people offered him some wine mingled with myrrh, which was an opiate, a painkiller; however, He would not drink from it. Hahn asked "Why not"? He concedes that Jesus could have refused the offer because he was undergoing his ordeal to redeem mankind. But Hahn believes that there is more to it than that reason. He explains his reasoning by first reminding us that Jesus had said earlier that evening at the Last Supper that he would not "taste of the fruit of the vine again until I come into the kingdom" then by referring to John 19 where the Evangelist makes it perfectly clear that Jesus intended that sacrifice be the "culmination, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover."

Hahn asks "why is it that Jesus happened to be wearing a seamless linen garment at the cross, when just coincidentally that's what the priest was legislated to wear when he sacrificed the Passover? Here is the true priest, as well as the true victim." Furthermore, "when he was crucified, unlike the two thieves whose legs had to be broken to expedite death, his bones were not broken. Why? To fulfill the scripture where it says, 'None of his bones shall be broken.'" This quotation makes reference to the Jewish law that only unblemished lambs could be offered in sacrifice at the Temple. This law precluded the sacrifice of lambs with broken bones. Since Jesus was taking the place of the Passover Lamb, none of his bones could be broken either.

Then Hahn tries to drive his point home by quoting John 19: 28-30: "After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), 'I thirst'. A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." A hyssop branch was the same kind of branch the Israelites had used to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the doorpost the night before the angel of death passed over Egypt taking the lives of the Egyptian firstborn.

It was finished; Jesus had fulfilled the Scriptures to redeem mankind. He was about to enter his Father's kingdom. According to Hahn, Jesus was nearing the end of his earthly life, and said, "I thirst" so he could drink from the sponge to fulfill the Scriptures; this was the fourth cup, the cup of the Passover Meal that consummated the supper. Up until that time, Jesus had refused the wine that had been offered to him. By his refusal to take the wine until right before his death, the consummation when he was about to pass over to his Father, he was fulfilling the Scriptures that he would not "taste of the fruit of the vine again until I enter into the kingdom."

To conclude this discussion of how Jesus said the first Mass, I shall quote from a transcript of a speech given by Hahn at length:

When Jesus said, 'It is finished', and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, his breath. The it, of course you realize by now, is the Passover sacrifice. Because who is Jesus Christ? He is the sacrifice of Egypt, the firstborn son. Remember, the Egyptians involuntarily had to offer up their firstborn sons as atonement for their own sins and wickedness. Christ dies for Egypt and the world. Plus, he is the Passover lamb, the unblemished lamb, without broken bones who offers himself up for the life of the world. This fits with John's gospel, because as soon as Jesus was introduced in chapter 1 of the fourth gospel by John the Baptist, what did John say? He said, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And here is the lamb, headed for the altar of the cross, dying as a righteous firstborn and as an unblemished lamb. I believe that it's best to say in light of scripture that the sacrifice of Christ did not begin with the first spike, it didn't begin when the cross was sunk into the ground. It began in the upper room. That's where the sacrifice began. And I would also suggest that the Passover meal by which Jesus initiated the new Covenant in his own blood did not end in the upper room, but at Calvary. It's all of one piece. The sacrifice begins in the upper room with the institution of the Eucharist and it ends at Calvary. Calvary begins with the Eucharist. The Eucharist ends at Calvary. This is why the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, makes present on our altars the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary.

We must add that some scripture scholars and theologians, such as Dale Vree, editor of the *New Oxford Review*, disagree with Hahn's theses regarding the fourth cup. They don't think that he has adequately proven his case and that he should present it to other theologians and scripture scholars for review before publishing such hypotheses.

How to Prepare for Mass

Since the Mass makes present the most important events that ever happened in the history of the world, should we not discuss how we should prepare for and participate in the celebration? Before we celebrate Mass, we should properly prepare ourselves. The Mass is a sacred event celebrated in a sacred place. Therefore, we should dress and act appropriately and not as if we were going to the beach or to attend an athletic event or to play a sport. We should dress appropriately for the celebration of the Mass, which used to mean by wearing one's "Sunday Best." The way we dress expresses our attitude toward God and his sacraments. Moreover, the way we behave before and during the celebration will determine whether or not we are merely spectators or participants. Three things that we must do in order to fully participate—that is to be present and aware of what is going on—in the Mass, are: 1. we must recollect ourselves, 2. be still, 3. and be silent so we can listen. The best book I ever read on the subject of Mass participations is Romano Guardini's book on the subject.

Recollection: What does it mean to be recollected? Before we can fully participate in the Mass, we must learn to free ourselves from attractions or distractions from without and turmoil from within. In the parlance of a generation ago, one must become "calm, cool, and collected." This calming of the self is called composure or recollection. Recollection means collecting the scattered self and returning to the center of one's being. The person who is distracted by what is going on around him or herself or is daydreaming is not aware of what is happening before and during the Mass; he or she is simply not present; he or she is merely a spectator. Distracted persons are not themselves. Only composed persons can be fully aware of what is going on around them; only they are wide-awake, are present, and are ready to hear the word of God and participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We must be present to respond to God's outpouring of grace with adoration and love; we cannot participate if we are not there in mind, heart, and spirit, with attention, devotion, and love.

Recollection is difficult to achieve and maintain. Our full participation in the Mass is possible only with composure, a condition that is not easy to achieve and maintain, because of the attractions in our society and the inner turmoil that modern living causes in us. One must diligently practice achieving this state of mind, body, and spirit. We should begin to prepare ourselves for Mass even before we leave home. We should start to compose ourselves when we examine our consciences and consider the sacrifices we intend to make at Mass as discussed below in the Penitential Rite and Offertory sections. Composure is the only way that we can escape time and approach eternity, which is the Mass—Heaven brought to earth.

Stillness: Stillness is a condition necessary for full Mass participation. Stillness means not to move around during the celebration more than necessary. A congregation is a gathering of people united by faith and the love of God. Only to the extent that those at the celebration of the Mass are composed and fully aware of what is happening are they a congregation; otherwise, they are only an audience, a group of spectators. In order to be a congregation, a people must not only be physically present, but they must be composed and still as well. In order to achieve this, we should go to Church early if possible—at least 10-15 minutes before the beginning of

Mass—to better achieve composure and stillness. It is in the stillness of the church that one can become more fully composed and still.

How can one achieve and maintain stillness during Mass? This is a lot easier said than done in most Catholic Churches today. People coming late, leaving early, talking, visiting, making noise, looking around, squirming, shuffling about, coughing, moving around, and the like can be very distracting. It is as if though they have no idea why they are there. In the past, non-Catholics were always extremely impressed, even awestruck, with the stillness and silence in a Catholic Church and the feeling of the sacred that was produced by it. Tragically, just as they have lost a sense of sin, many of today's Catholics have lost a sense of the sacred and are no longer silent and still, no longer reverent in church. This makes our task much more difficult; we will just have to work that much harder to compose ourselves and be still, something for which God will amply reward us.

Silence: Silence simply means not to talk except when singing and making responses in the liturgy. People in our modern world simply cannot stand silence; they constantly need something to stimulate and bombard their senses, whether it be the racket of modern music, the sound of the television or radio, the noise of motor vehicles, or the constant chatter of idle and superficial conversation. They are empty and require constant filling with sounds of various sorts. No wonder they never hear God!

Now that we have completed looking at the three components of good Mass participation—composure, stillness, and silence—let's see how they are related? All three of these components are required to fully participate in the Mass; they are needed to focus out attention on what is happening. One can hear what is being said in the liturgy only to the extent that he or she is composed, still, and silent. This is especially true of the reading of the word of God, the Holy Scriptures, for one must be present and aware to hear the word of God. The scriptures are meant to be listened to, for God is speaking to us. We can listen only to the extent that there is silence and we are focused on what is being read. The Adoration Chapel at St. Patrick Church has a sign that contains Psalm 46:10, which says "Be still, and know that I am God." We are ready to participate in the celebration of the Mass only when we are composed, still, and silent; only then can we say as did the Lord's faithful servant, Ananias, "Here I am Lord" (Acts 9:10).

When the Mass is boring: We have all heard people say that the Mass is boring and that they don't get anything out of it. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Mass attendance has declined so much over the past few decades. What can we do to overcome this problem?

We think what they are really saying is that they do not know what the Mass is, or if they do, they are not participating and aware of what is going on; they are simply sitting in the pews as spectators rather than being participants; they aren't putting anything into it. If one doesn't put anything into something, he or she won't get anything out of it. More often than not, we think, they are looking for entertainment, such as is found at a concert, a ballgame, or a movie, rather than to worship God.

It is true that human beings become easily tired of events that occur over and over again, day after day, and in the case of the Mass, Sunday after Sunday. Routine and familiarity often lead to monotony and boredom, even to becoming bored at the most sublime event of all time—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Beautiful church architecture, religious art, and inspiring music once helped to raise the hearts and minds of participants at Mass to God. Modern liturgists have all too often given us drab buildings, bland art, poor music, dull sermons, and tired liturgies, which contribute to our natural inclination to boredom.

What then are we to do when we become bored with Mass? To begin, we must know and understand what the Mass is. That is why we are presenting this essay. But this is only a start; one needs to seriously study the Mass all of their lives; one can never learn too much about it. We have learned that the Mass is a sacrament from which we can receive the grace of God and that it makes present the Last Supper and sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary. Furthermore, it renews the covenant that God has made with the People of God, the Catholic Church. Moreover, the Mass is Heaven brought to earth. Each time we go to Mass we should remind ourselves of our belief in these truths; one simply can't be bored with that.

Up until now we have used our intellects to learn what the Mass is, now we must learn to use your wills to carry out our beliefs. When we attend Mass, we should make a special effort to compose ourselves and to remain composed. This will help us to minimize distractions and calm ourselves from within. Moreover, it will help if we become aware of what is going on in the liturgy. Doing this is not easy as we discussed earlier. We must continually work hard during the Mass to concentrate on what is going on and be aware of what we are doing. However, there is only so much that we can do on our own; we shouldn't forget that God will play his part to help you too.

When we have done all of these things, we will no longer be bored at Mass and all of the conditions that contribute to boredom will not matter, because we will know what we are doing and why we are doing it. We will be aware of what is going on and be a participant in the most important event that has ever occurred and will ever occur—the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

The Liturgy of the Mass

Introductory Rites

Entrance: The Mass begins with the Entrance during which the congregation gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist sings the Entrance song during the procession of the priest and his ministers from the front of the church to the altar at the back. When the procession reaches the altar, the priest turns around facing the congregation and he and the congregation sign themselves with the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is a prayer that goes back to the very early Church. In the early Church, Christians traced themselves with the Cross on their foreheads or as St. Augustine and St. Jerome tell us they traced the Cross on their foreheads, lips, and heart, much as we do today before the Gospel. When we sign ourselves we are expressing our belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption. Signing ourselves with the Cross summarizes our faith in a single gesture, and renews the covenant with God that began at our baptisms. By signing ourselves at the beginning of Mass, we are showing that we did not come to be spectators, but participants in the Paschal mystery. Because of what it means, we should sign ourselves with great care. St. Therese of Lisieux would get very disturbed with her fellow sisters who signed themselves carelessly. The penitential Rite follows.

Penitential Rite

The *Didache* or catechism of the Apostles says that any participation in the Eucharist should begin with a confession of sins. This process should begin before the Mass begins. In fact, one should conduct a careful examination of conscience the night before or at least an hour or so before going to Mass. After accusing ourselves of sins before God and our neighbor, we throw ourselves at God's mercy when we say the *Kyrie*. In the *Kyrie* we ask each of the persons of the Trinity to have mercy on us sinners: *Lord have mercy* (the Father), *Christ have mercy* (the Son), *Lord have mercy* (the Holy Spirit). The *Kyrie* was part of the earliest liturgies of the Church.

The Gloria

Following the *Kyrie*, we give praise and honor to God in the Gloria for his love and mercy. This prayer has been around for at least since the second century. In fact, it was the song that the choirs of angels sung in the presence of the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth.

Liturgy of the Word

Reading of the Scriptures: The Liturgy of the Word or readings from Holy Scripture follow. St. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the Word of God made flesh (incarnate). Catholics who

attend Mass daily hear almost the entire Bible read over a three-year cycle. The first reading is usually from the Old Testament, followed by either a recited or sung Psalm. The second reading is a reading from the New Testament Epistles or letters, followed by the reading of the Gospel by the priest or deacon. The Word should be revered as much as the Eucharist itself, because it is God speaking to us. The Word is not a dead letter, but the living Word of God. When we hear the Scriptures, we are agreeing to live by them and we will be held accountable accordingly.

The Homily: The homily follows the Liturgy of the Word. During the homily or sermon, the priest or deacon comments on the scriptures, during which he explains difficult passages and makes practical applications. The sermon doesn't need to be entertaining; its purpose is to instruct in the ways of God.

The Creed: The congregation usually recites the Nicene Creed after the homily, but the Apostles Creed is sometimes substituted for it. The Nicene Creed is an ancient summary of the Catholic Faith. When we recite the Creed we are professing our belief in the principle teachings of the Catholic Church. Countless Christians were martyred over the centuries because of their faithful and persistent belief in these doctrines. The Apostles Creed is a summary of the Faith handed on to us by the Apostles. The Nicene Creed is a later elaboration on the Apostles Creed to counter false teachings on the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Arius and others had denied that the Son was equal to the Father and was little more than a prophet. He taught that Jesus was not God, but just a special man. The Arian heresy was challenged at the Council of Nicea in 325 by St. Athanasius and his bishop, St. Alexander of Alexandria, Egypt. The creed that we recite today came out of that first ecumenical council, but was further refined in the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Nicene Creed is the correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. We should think about the meaning of the Creed when we recite it; we should not recite it thoughtlessly. The Blessed Mother has told us in a private revelation that she is especially pleased with those who say the Creed thoughtfully and reverently.

General Intercessions: The Liturgy of the Word ends with intercessory prayers to God on behalf of the assembled community of believers, the Church, and the whole world.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Offertory: Now we begin a different, but equally important part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Offertory. During this phase of the Mass the ushers collect money from the congregation while the priest prepares the altar for the sacrifice that is to come. Bread, wine, and money are brought to the altar by the ushers to support the Church. In the early Church the congregation baked the bread and pressed the wine for the celebration. This is the appropriate time to offer our sacrifices to God the Father through the Son. At this time we offer our suffering, sorrow, work, schooling, and anything else that is pleasing to God. It is recommended that we consider our gifts when we examine our consciences the night before or at least before we arrive at Mass. Jesus will unite our imperfect sacrifice to

his perfect and acceptable sacrifice and offer it to his Father. The priest prays over the gifts that they may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.

As a member of the priesthood of all believers we offer our sacrifices as well as Jesus' to the Father, but Jesus ordained only the priest to transform the bread and wine into his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. The priest is another Christ (*alter Christus*) who represents Jesus in his person (*in persona Christi*) in the administration of the sacraments. It is Jesus the High Priest who is speaking when the priest says the words of consecration at Mass or forgives us our sins at the sacrament of Penance.

The water that the priest pours into the wine to be consecrated symbolizes the union of Christ's human and divine natures, His sharing in our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, and the blood and water that flowed from his heart when the Roman soldier thrust his spear into his side. Moreover, the Blessed Mother plays a big role in the Offertory, for she offered her son, as well as her own suffering and sorrow, to the Father at Calvary so that the world could be redeemed. For this reason she is called the Co-Redemptrix. As we shall discuss later how Calvary is made present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Eucharistic Prayer: Following the Offertory is the heart of the Mass, the Consecration. It begins when the priest says "The Lord be with you and the congregation responds with "And also with you." The priest follows with "Lift up your hearts, and the congregation responds. These prayers were practices in the earliest Church. Then the congregation says the Sanctus, the "Holy, Holy, Holy," which calls to mind how the saints and angels sing praises before the Heavenly throne found in Revelation 4:8. At this time the saints and angels join the congregation to praise and honor God. We are now present at the Last Supper with Jesus and his apostles.

The Consecration: The Consecration follows as the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi capitis*) says the words "This is my body," and "This is the chalice of my blood." Added to the latter are the words "the blood of the new and everlasting covenant," which makes reference to the covenant that fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Moses. God promises in the new covenant, which is sealed by the blood of the lamb—Jesus Christ—to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper.

At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become the substances of Jesus' body and blood, even though they still appear to be bread and wine. Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine represents the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his Blood from his Body. Calvary is made present at this time and we are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalen, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels,

and the congregation. The Mass is literally Heaven brought to earth. At the end of the consecration, the priest, representing Jesus, says to continue doing this in memory of him.

The Eucharistic Prayer continues after the consecration with the **Offering** of the gifts and the **Intercessions** and ends with the **Memorial Acclamation**, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again followed by the **Doxology** and the **Great Amen**.

The Communion Rite

Now the Mass enters into another phase, the Communion Rite. The Communion Rite begins with the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, the Lord's Prayer. This is a most ancient liturgical practice. Following this we offer each other the Sign of Peace to carry out Jesus' command to go and reconcile with our brothers and sisters before we receive him. When the bread is being broken we repeat the words of John the Baptist: "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world (John 1:29), have mercy on us," Next we follow Jesus' commandment to eat his Body and drink his Blood by receiving Holy Communion. In communion we renew our bond with the eternal family, the Holy Trinity and with God's family on earth, his Church. This is the time that we should praise Jesus for his goodness and majesty, thank him for all of his blessings and gifts, express sorrow for your sins and make a firm resolution to sin no more, and ask favors for ourselves and above all for others.

Jesus said in his Bread of Life sermon, that "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Holy Communion is the sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Before doing so we should carefully examine our consciences, because as St. Paul has told us, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). This means that one must be in the state of sanctifying grace, not in the state of mortal sin, to receive the sacrament worthily. "Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion" (*Catechism* No. 1385).

How often must we receive Holy Communion? The Church requires that we receive Holy Communion at least once a year, and if possible during the Easter season. However, the Church strongly recommends that we receive Holy Communion every Sunday and on holy days, and even daily. To prepare for the worthy reception of Holy Communion, one must abstain from food at least one hour before reception.

The main benefit of receiving Holy Communion is an intimate union with Jesus Christ in his full humanity and divinity. In this regard, Jesus said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Receiving our Lord in Holy Communion increases and renews the life of grace we received at baptism. It unites us to Jesus Christ and cleanses our past

venial sins and preserves us from future sins, for the more we share in the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is for us to separate ourselves from him by committing sins. Furthermore, communion strengthens our love of God and neighbor and helps us to become more detached from the things of this world that separate us from him. Moreover, those who receive Christ in Holy Communion are not only united more closely with Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church, but also more closely with his Body, the members of his Church. Of this matter St. Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The use of bread and wine for the consecration is perfectly suitable for the purpose. Not only are they the staff of life, but also the bread, which is made of many grains and the wine, which is made of many grapes, symbolizes the unity of the members in the one Body of Christ, the Church.

Who is permitted to receive Holy Communion? Ordinarily non-Catholic Christians are not allowed to receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, but "When, in the Ordinary's [the bishop's] judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions" (*Catechism* No. 1401).

Concluding Rite

During the Concluding Rites, announcements may be made after the Communion Prayer. The celebrant then blesses the people assembled. Sometimes, the blessing is very simple. On special days, the blessing may be more extensive. In every case, the blessing is always Trinitarian: "May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." It is in the triune God and in the sign of the cross that we find our blessing.

After the blessing, the deacon dismisses the people. In fact, the dismissal gives the liturgy its name. The word "Mass" derives from the Latin word, *Missa*. At one time, the people were dismissed with the words *Ite, missa est* meaning "Go, you, (the Church) has been sent." The word *Missa* is related to the word *missio*, the root of the English word "mission". At the conclusion of the Mass, the priest sends us out into the world to live the sacrifice we have just celebrated in our daily lives. The *Catechism* says, "The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church" (*Catechism*, No. 1407). "Having passed from this world to the Father, Christ gives us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him. Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints" (*Catechism*, No. 1419). The liturgy does not

KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY

simply come to an end. Those assembled are sent forth to bring the fruits of the Eucharist to the world. In the Mass we have been united with Christ's sacrifice. Keep holy the Lord's Day so that the Lord's Day can keep you holy.