

NEW WORDS, SAME MASS

Liturgy of the Eucharist

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In this third talk, we have reached the summit of the Mass, since in this second part, not only will God will come to us, He will be "in us" through the miracle of Holy Communion. This part is called the "Liturgy of the Eucharist" and is directly connected to the Last Supper. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus "took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to His Apostles. So, now notice these parallels: He took the bread (Offertory), blessed it(the Eucharistic Prayer and Consecration), He broke it (the Lamb of God) and gave it (Holy Communion)! The second part of the Mass is structured directly on the Last Supper. So, let's begin:

We start with the Offertory, and one thing to notice are the new words the priest will now pray: "Pray brethren that MY SACRIFICE AND YOURS will be acceptable..." Once again, the change is only in the translation. This is what the Latin has said all along. But, what does this change mean? It's a reminder of the two types of priesthood in the Church. The ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful. Though the priest and the people are both offering the same sacrifice, they do not offer it in the exact same way. The priest, because of the sacrament of Holy Orders, is acting in the person of Christ ("persona Christi") and is the one truly offering the bread and wine. The baptized are also offering the Sacrifice but THROUGH

the priest. So, one offering but two different roles. But, beyond this, the Church also teaches that both priest and people are offering their lives to God which is symbolized in the bread and wine. These new words are a reminder that you are not a bystander or spectator at the Mass but are essentially involved in what is occurring on that altar.

Now, we come to the central prayer of the Mass called the "Eucharistic Prayer". It is during this prayer that the bread and wine will be changed into Christ. The priest can choose from 4 main Eucharistic Prayers. We begin again with that new exchange in which you will respond "and with your spirit". The priest says "Lift up your hearts."(the word translated means not just 'heart' but your "whole self"). Your new response will be, "It is right and just." Again, this is what the Latin says and basically gets straight to the point by acknowledging that it is both fitting and appropriate that we give our selves to God. Why? Because He has created us, given us every good thing and shed His blood for us. To give our whole selves back to God is not only good, it is an act of justice.

Next, we come to the second "angelic prayer" during Mass, the "Holy, Holy, Holy". Actually, the first part comes from the angels and the second part comes from the crowds on Palm Sunday. Overall, this prayer remains basically the same as it was. One small change will be where we once said "Lord God of power and might", we will now say "Lord God of hosts". This is truer to the Latin and is more biblical. The 'hosts' refers to the armies of

angels which God commands in the fight against evil. The title "Lord God of Hosts" conveys more of a sense of God's universal power over the physical and spiritual worlds.

Now, we move into the main Eucharistic Prayer. You should notice that something big is about to happen because it's the first time at Mass that you are asked to kneel. The miracle of transubstantiation is about to occur and God is about to step down upon our altar. As I said earlier, the priest chooses from four main prayers. Before Vatican II, we only used the first one. Vatican II went back into our history and brought back several others that were used by the early Christians. We will not see anything added here, simply a retranslation. However, for the priest, this will be where he will experience most of the changes he must learn. For example, from prayer #1 where it speaks of Melchizedek and the angel:

The new translation says: "Be pleased to look upon these offerings with serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

"In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing."

In Eucharistic Prayer #2, where you once heard "Let your spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy", you will now hear "Make holy,

therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like dewfall." "Dewfall" is a great reference to the manna that came down from heaven that fed the Jews, and we now ask the Spirit to gently come down like dewfall to bring to us the new Manna of the Eucharist, as our food..

Finally, in Eucharistic Prayer #3, there's another change to listen for. Where you once heard "so that from East to West a perfect offering may be made", now you will hear "so that from the rising of the sun to its setting, a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name." Here we have a very direct reference to the Prophet Malachi, the last book in the OT, who foretells that one day, not the Jews but the Gentiles will offer an unbloody sacrifice from the rising of the sun to its setting, until the end of time. The Catholic Church fulfills that prophecy in every Mass by offering up the bread and wine which becomes Christ's body and blood, a sacrifice that is unbloody on the altar.

Next, let's go right to the Consecration. Again, the original is not changing, only the translation of it. One change will be that instead of using the word "cup", it will be translated as "chalice". "Cup" sounded more mundane whereas "chalice" conveys the idea of ceremony and ritual.

Then, comes the two words that have become slightly controversial, only because some don't understand their meaning. What you hear now at the Consecration is "the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, it will be shed **for you and for all...**". What you will begin to hear is "**for you and**

for many". Why the change? Besides the Latin, "for many' is the actual language used in the Last Supper in Matthew and Mark. Also, 4 times the Prophet Isaiah speaks of "the many." Some think it conveys the idea that Christ died only for some rather than 'all' people. The Church interprets it another way. Christ DID die for each and every person who has walked or will walk the face of the earth. BUT, not everyone will accept it. It's a sad fact that not everyone will go to heaven. It won't be because Christ didn't offer the gift but because they didn't accept it. "For many' refers to those who received and accepted the gift of salvation." Only God knows how many "many" refers to.

Next we come to the Mystery of Faith which directly follows the Consecration, and here you will hear a noticeable difference. The priest will no longer say "Let us proclaim the Mystery of Faith" but now he will simply say "The Mystery of Faith". When we make a "proclamation', its ABOUT someone, as if they are not there. But, the Lord is right there physically present on the altar after the Consecration. So now, we "acclaim" Him, in other words "we address" the Lord Jesus Christ.

This leads to the next change. You will no longer hear "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again". First of all, this was never in the Latin to begin with. And second, even now, it's the only response that speaks ABOUT Christ(proclamation) and not TO Christ(acclamation). Notice:

"Dying YOU destroyed our death", "When we eat this bread...we proclaim YOUR death...", "Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection..." From now on, the three responses are acclamations TO Christ. Once again, nothing has changed-only retranslated!

Now, we must fast forward past the Lord's prayer until we come to the "Lamb of God". Here, we will find several significant retranslations which powerfully point to the Gospels and New Testament. The first is on the part of the priest. At present, the priest raises the consecrated host and says "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Soon, you will hear "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". This is meant to take us back to one of the most important moments of the New Testament, when John the Baptist introduced Christ to us for the first time along the Jordan River. The "Behold" is more evocative of the term used by John the Baptist. The Church is doing the very same thing at this part of the Mass. She is introducing us to our Eucharistic Savior now in the Consecrated Host whom we are about to receive.

Next, you now hear, "Happy are those who are called to His Supper." There was much misunderstanding by some, as to what this meant. I've heard some priests say mistakenly, "Happy are those called to THIS supper." Besides the fact that this is not what the words say, there is also something much larger being alluded to at this moment. The Church is opening up the

Book of Revelation chapter 19, where the Lamb of God is hosting a wedding banquet to celebrate His marriage to His Bride. We are reminded here that the Mass has two levels of reality: one is the actual Mass at which we are gathered. But, it is also a FORESHADOWING of things to come. The book of Revelation says that Christ, the Lamb, will come back one day to take His Bride, the Church, to Himself. Each Mass is a foreshadowing of an eternal celebration that each baptized person has been invited to attend.

Finally, we come to the people's response to this. Again, a Scriptural reference once lost is now regained. The response will soon be, "Lord I am not worthy that you enter under my roof...". This is a direct quote from the Roman Centurion who didn't feel worthy for Christ to enter His house to heal his servant. He showed amazing faith and Christ made him a model of faith for us all. Now, the Lord Jesus wants to come to us. Using the Centurion's words, we express our unworthiness to entertain such an important Guest. However, if Christ says the word, we believe our soul will be made worthy. As you can see, the bible is everywhere we turn in the Mass and soon it will be clearer for us to see.

Last of all, we come to the dismissal. In Latin, it was "ita missa est"... "go you are sent". This is where we got the term 'Mass', as well as missionary. The Church recognized that the idea of "being sent out" from Mass was not as clear as it should be. So the new dismissals, which Pope

Benedict had a part in composing, convey the idea of mission and evangelization more prominently. The very last thing Christ said to his Apostles at the Ascension was "Go" and so now you will notice that all 4 dismissals begin with the word "Go". I recall a Protestant Church in Alexandria that has a sign posted facing the parking lot as you leave which says "You are now entering the mission field." This is what the Church conveys at the end of Mass, the idea that each one of us is a missionary as part of the Church. Both in word and in action, at home and in the neighborhood, at school and at work, we are all bringing the message in our own way to the world. Its also a reminder that we should not leave Mass early because we have yet to be commissioned by Christ to go out with what we have heard and received.

I'd like to conclude this miniseries with a true story. In ancient Greece, a young man was condemned to die for some political crime which he committed. The Judge passed the sentence and he was about to be led to his punishment. Just then, his brother returned from war and entered the courtroom. Tearing open his tunic, he showed the judge the wounds he had received for his country. On the merits of these wounds, he pleaded for his brother's life. The judge was moved by these wounds and granted the prisoner pardon for the sake of his brother.

You and I have sinned against God and broken his commandments. We rightly deserve punishment for our sins. But, Christ has stepped in and begs his Father not to remember our sins, and instead pleads mercy for us for the sake of his wounds. This is what is occurring at every Mass. There is nothing we can say in the presence of such love, such goodness, such mercy...and so we end the Mass simply with "Thanks be to God."