

# ECHOING THE MYSTERY

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*Unlocking the Deposit of Faith in Catechesis*

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EXCERPT FROM  
*Echoing the Mystery*  
Chapter 33: The Holy Mass



*Because He always intended to divinize us, Jesus entrusted the Mass to the Church, by which He gives us the fullest participation in the divine life that we can have on earth.*

# 33 The Holy Mass

## Divine Perspective

**Because He always intended to divinize us, Jesus entrusted the Mass to the Church, by which He gives us the fullest participation in the divine life that we can have on earth.**

### TRINITY

The Mass is the high point of liturgy. By it, we share in the Son's worship of the Father and become offerings, ourselves, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### CHURCH

The Mass is the Church's greatest act of worship. When offering the Mass, the Pilgrim Church on earth is united with the Church in heaven, sharing their worship of the Father.



### PASCHAL MYSTERY

The Ascended Christ acts as our high priest in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which re-presents His Sacrifice of the Cross.

### DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Mass invites us into the prayer of the only Son of God. Our hopes, joys, struggles, work, and love are made a sacrifice to God and become holy through the Mass.

PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN

## Theological Virtues (AIMS OF INSTRUCTION)



**SEEING  
WITH FAITH**

Understanding the realities into which we enter in the Mass may startle the ordinary Catholic, but will also be the catalyst for growth in "seeing" with the eyes of faith. Once we awaken to the liturgy as the very Sacrifice of Christ and a pledge of future glory, we begin to see our entire lives with the eyes of faith, as united to this supreme offering of Christ.



**ABIDING  
WITH HOPE**

Having grown in faith, participation in the true spiritual worship of the realities of the Mass, confidence in God and the Church will anchor the heart and mind of the believer. In the Mass, we share already in the life to come, and we realize that if God loved us so much that He did not spare His own Son, and that He gives Him to us now in the Eucharist, we can hope in Him to give us Himself forever in eternity.



**BURNING  
WITH CHARITY**

"By giving Himself to us, Christ revives our love" (CCC 1394). The Eucharist is the source of the Church's spiritual vitality. Christ's gift not only inspires love, it infuses it into the soul. When we understand the greatness of this gift, we seek to be united in charity with the members of the Church and to pour ourselves out for the poor, in imitation of Him.

## Scripture and Essentials

### 1) THE MASS IS A SACRIFICE.



- ✦ **Lk 22:19-20** - The Institution of the Eucharist
- ✦ **Heb 7:25-27** - Jesus lives forever to intercede for us; He offered Himself once and for all on the Cross.

- ✦ **Heb 13:15** - Through Him let us offer a continual sacrifice of praise.
- ✦ **Rom 12:1-2** - Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

CCC 1323-1324, 1364-1368, 1372

————— *Scripture for further study* —————

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It re-presents the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each Mass is one with the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the Cross.</li> <li>○ Jesus commanded us to renew this offering until the end of time: “Do this in memory of Me.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Mt 26:26 - “This is My Body.”</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Heb 7:25-27 - Jesus lives forever to intercede for us; He offered Himself once and for all on the Cross.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Lk 22:19-20 - The Institution of the Eucharist</i></li> </ul>            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mass makes the sacrifice of the Cross “the sacrifice of the whole Christ;” it allows us to share in His ultimate act of worship.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Heb 13:15 - Through Him let us offer a continual sacrifice of praise.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It offers the Church herself, the Body of Christ, by uniting her to the sacrifice of Christ, her Head.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Eph 1:10 - God’s plan to unite in Him all things in heaven and on earth.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>1 Cor 15:28 - That God may be everything to everyone.</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Mass unites our prayers, praises, work, and suffering to the prayer and offering of Christ and divinizes them.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Mt 10:39 - He who loses his life for My sake will find it.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Mk 8:35 - Whoever loses His life for My sake and for the Gospel will save it.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>2 Pet. 1:4 - He made us partakers of the divine nature.</i></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union with God and transformation in love are the heart of this sacrifice.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Rom 12:1-2 - Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice; be transformed by the renewal of your mind.</i></li> </ul>  |

## 2)

### THE MASS IS A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR ALL GOD’S WORKS IN CREATION, REDEMPTION AND SANCTIFICATION.



- ✧ **Rev 7:11-12** - The angels fell before God and worshiped.
- ✧ **Lk 22:19** - He gave thanks and broke the bread....

- ✧ **Ps 116:12-13, 17** - A return to the Lord for His goodness: lifting the chalice of salvation and offering a thanksgiving sacrifice.

CCC 1329, 1359-1361, 2637

————— *Scripture for further study* —————

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus takes up the blessings of the Psalms and Jewish prayer and gives them their ultimate expression.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Ps 103:1-5 - Bless the Lord, O my soul, who fills you with good things.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Lk 22:19 - He gave thanks and broke the bread....</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All heaven and earth join in His thanksgiving.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Rev 7:11-12 - The angels fell before God and worshiped.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Rev 11:16-17 - The elders fell on their faces and worshiped.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eucharist means “thanksgiving,” which is the chief characteristic of the prayer of the Church.</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ <i>Col 2:6-7 - Live in Christ, rooted in faith and abounding in thanksgiving.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Ps 145:10-12 - All Your works will give You thanks, and all Your saints will bless You.</i></li> <li>✧ <i>Ps 50:14, 23, Ps 107:22, Ps 116:17— Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, which honors God.</i></li> </ul> |



## 3)

**AS A MEMORIAL, THE MASS UNITES US TO THE PASCHAL MYSTERY AND CARRIES OUT THE WHOLE WORK OF REDEMPTION.**

- ✧ **Heb 7:25-27** - Jesus lives forever to intercede for us; He offered Himself once and for all on the Cross.
- ✧ **Eph 5:2** - Christ gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering to God.

- ✧ **1 Cor 11:23-26** - As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.

CCC 1103, 1166-1167, 1330, 1332, 1362-1364, 1366

— *Scripture for further study* —

- Ever since He offered Himself on the Cross, Christ has been interceding for us at the Father's right hand as our High Priest and Sacrifice.
  - ✧ *Heb 7:25-27 - Jesus lives forever to intercede for us; He offered Himself once and for all on the Cross..*
- Through the Mass, we participate in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection and are already seated with Christ at God's right hand.
  - ✧ *1 Cor 10:16 - This bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.*
  - ✧ *1 Cor 11:23-26 - As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.*
- In the *anamnesis* of the Mass, the Holy Spirit awakens the Church's memory and brings the saving events of the Paschal Mystery to life, making them really present.
  - ✧ *Eph 5:2 - Christ gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering to God.*
- The Church gathers to celebrate the Paschal Mystery on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection.
  - It is a day of encounter with the risen Lord.
  - The first day of creation and redemption are united in the celebration of the Mass.
  - This looks forward to the great, eternal Sabbath rest when God's work will be complete, and God will be all in all.
  - ✧ *Heb 4:9-11 - There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*
  - ✧ *Acts 20:7 - On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread....*

## 4)

**THE GOAL OF THE MASS IS ACHIEVED IN THE SACRED BANQUET OF OUR LORD'S BODY AND BLOOD.**

- ✧ **Jn 6:35-58** - The Bread of Life discourse
- ✧ **Rev 3:20** - Behold, I stand at the door and knock.... I will come in and eat with him and he with Me.

- ✧ **1 Cor 11:27-29** - The one who eats or drinks in an unworthy manner sins against the Body and Blood of the Lord.
- ✧ **Mt 8:8** - Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

CCC 1333-1335, 1382, 1384-1388, 2835

— *Scripture for further study* —

- Through this banquet, Christ brings about the deepest communion of life with us.
  - ✧ *Mt 26:26-29 - The Last Supper*
  - ✧ *Rev 3:20 - Behold, I stand at the door and knock.... I will come in and eat with him and he with Me.*

- We must prepare ourselves to be open to Him by examining our conscience and participating in the Mass.

✱ *1 Cor 11:27-29 - The one who eats or drinks in an unworthy manner sins against the Body and Blood of the Lord.*

- We are not worthy, but He comes.

✱ *Mt 8:8 - Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.*

- Jesus taught us to ask for this as our “daily bread” in the Our Father.

✱ *Mt 6:11 - Give us this day our daily bread.*

## 5)

### THROUGH THE MASS, THE RISEN CHRIST REMAINS WITH US UNTIL HE COMES IN GLORY.



✱ **Mt 28:20** - I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

✱ **Rom 8:34** - Christ, seated at the right hand of God, intercedes for us.

✱ **Mt 18:20** - Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I.

CCC 1088, 1373-1376, SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM 7

— *Scripture for further study* —

- He is present in His Word, the priest, and the faithful gathered.
- He is present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist.
- Because He is present in all these ways, the Church’s voice becomes one with Christ in His prayer in the Mass.

✱ *Mt 26:26-29, Mk 14:22-25, Lk 22:17-19 - The Last Supper*

## 6)

### SINCE THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES, THE SAME MASS HAS BEEN CELEBRATED IN THE ENTIRE CHURCH THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. \*



✱ **Mal 1:11** - In every place, a pure sacrifice is offered to My name.

✱ **Heb 12:22-24** - You have come to Mount Zion, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

✱ **1 Cor 12:23-26** - St. Paul hands on the Eucharist, to be celebrated until He comes.

CCC 1345, 1346-1355

— *Scripture for further study* —

- It begins with the Liturgy of the Word.
  - The Father speaks lovingly to His children.
  - They respond in the Spirit with the Psalm and the intercessions.
- In the presentation of the offerings, the Church gives all creation back to the Father in the bread and the wine.

✱ *Heb 4:12 - The Word of God is living and effective...*

✱ *2 Pet 1:19 - We do well to pay attention to the prophetic message as to a lamp shining in the darkness.*

✱ *Col 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*

✱ *1 Tim 2:1-2 - I urge that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men.*

✱ *Eph 6:18 - Pray at all times in the Spirit.*

✱ *Heb 8:3 - Every high priest offers gifts.*

\* For ideas on teaching participation in the parts of the Mass, See Appendix 2: "Teaching Points for Fostering Full, Active, and Conscious Participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass"

# 33 The Holy Mass

- The collection taken at this time is inspired by the example of Christ's love.
  - ✧ *2 Cor 9:10-11 - God who supplies bread and seed will make your resources produce thanksgiving.*
  - ✧ *2 Cor 8:9 - Though Christ was rich, He became poor, that by His poverty you might become rich.*
- The *anaphora* (or Eucharistic Prayer) is the heart of the celebration and includes the preface, the *epiclesis*, the institutional narrative, the *anamnesis*, and the intercessions.
  - ✧ *Heb 12:22-24 - You have come to Mount Zion, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.*
  - ✧ *Rev 7:12 - Thanksgiving, honor, and power and might be to our God.*
- The Lord's Prayer and the breaking of the bread prepare us for Communion.
- Communion unites us to the Lord, as a pledge of future glory.
- The Mass takes its name from the word for "dismissal": the dynamic is such that it sends us forth to bring this love to the world.
  - ✧ *Jn 6:51 - The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world.*

## Related Doctrines

1. The **Sabbath rest** is kept primarily by worshiping God in the Mass.
2. The Mass makes present the **Paschal Mystery** in its entirety and unites us to it.
3. The **priest** represents Christ the Head in the Mass.
4. The **faithful, as the Mystical Body of Christ**, unite their prayers and offering to Christ.
5. The Mass is the source and summit of **Christian Prayer**.
6. The Mass is a foretaste of **heaven**, is united to the worship of the **saints and angels**, and will continue until Christ comes in glory.

## Common Errors

1. "*Catholics think that every Mass re-crucifies Christ.*" The Mass and Calvary are one and the same sacrifice. At Calvary, that sacrifice was bloody. In the Mass, it is not bloody but glorified. But, because Christ is God, His actions are eternal, and the Mass, by making Him present, makes His eternal sacrifice present.
2. "*My personal prayer life has nothing to do with the Mass.*" We are called to full, active, conscious participation in the Mass. The Church calls us to attune our hearts and minds to the words and gestures of the Mass, lest we receive the grace of God in vain (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 11 and 14). The liturgy is the foundation and the summit of all Christian prayer, because we pray with Christ and in Him. We are lifted up beyond ourselves into Him, but he calls us to fully enter into it with all of our powers of mind and will.

3. *"I can't pray with the Mass. The language is too formal."* The Mass is the prayer of Christ, to which the Holy Spirit joins us. The beautiful and formal language of the Mass reflects that we are elevated beyond the everyday world of speech and human interactions to a divine mode. Study of the texts of the Mass can help us to engage in full, active, and conscious participation.
4. *"The Mass is the only prayer necessary for the Catholic."* Personal prayer internalizes and assimilates the mysteries celebrated in the liturgy. This prayer is absolutely necessary in order to prepare for the Mass and for the full flowering of grace to happen in us. At the same time, no private prayer or devotion, even the Rosary or reading Scripture, can take the place of Mass in the lives of the faithful.
5. *"The old Latin Mass is better than the Vatican II Mass."* As pilgrims on this earth, we must travel light, and as a wise Mother, the Church packs us exactly what we need for the journey. In the liturgy, some external forms change, but the content has stayed the same since the time of the Apostles. The Church discerns which things are essential, and which things can be better adapted to suit the needs of the present time. Vatican II called for just such a discernment, and the Church has given us the resulting, simplified form of the Mass as a means of grace to reach many people. The extraordinary ("Tridentine") form may be helpful to some for their devotional lives, but it must be remembered that both forms celebrate and communicate the Mystery effectively.
6. *"The Mass should only ever be celebrated in the language of the people. Latin is a dead language."* Opening to the use of the vernacular in the liturgy has proven of great benefit to many, enabling them to "understand and proclaim in his or her mother tongue the wonders of God" (Pope St. John Paul II, *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* 10), but Latin remains the liturgical language of the Church. It ties us to our roots. In God's providence, Christ came and the Gospel was proclaimed during the *Pax Romana*, and Rome was sanctified and forever sealed as the seat of Christ's vicar on earth with the blood of Sts. Peter and Paul. The Church asks that all Catholics learn the basic Mass parts in Latin (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 54) so that they can join with the faithful throughout the world in singing the praise of God, representing the unity of the Church among "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9-10).

## Liturgical Sources

**The Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi Sequences,** *written by St. Thomas Aquinas, are filled with the most glorious poetry of the Church, all in honor of the Most Holy Eucharist.*

*See Appendix 2 for resources on the history of the Mass and on teaching active participation in the Mass.*

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament  
have left us a memorial of your Passion,  
grant us, we pray,  
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood  
that we may always experience in ourselves  
the fruits of your redemption.  
Who live and reign with God the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

*(Roman Missal, Collect of the Solemnity of The Most Holy*

*Body and Blood of Our Lord)*

O God, who have called us to participate  
in this most sacred Supper,  
in which your Only Begotten Son,  
when about to hand himself over to death,  
entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity,  
the banquet of his love,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may draw from so great a mystery,  
the fullness of charity and of life.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

*(Roman Missal, Collect of Mass of the Lord's Supper)*



## Teaching through Beauty

HYMN: "Lauda Sion" by St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. taken from *the Lectionary*

Laud, O Zion, your salvation,  
Laud with hymns of exultation,  
Christ, your king and shepherd true:

Bring him all the praise you know,  
He is more than you bestow.  
Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for glad thanksgiving  
Is the quick'ning and the living  
Bread today before you set:

From his hands of old partaken,  
As we know, by faith unshaken,  
Where the Twelve at supper met.

Here the new law's new oblation,  
By the new king's revelation,  
Ends the form of ancient rite:

Now the new the old effaces,  
Truth away the shadow chases,  
Light dispels the gloom of night.

What he did at supper seated,  
Christ ordained to be repeated,  
His memorial ne'er to cease:

And his rule for guidance taking,  
Bread and wine we hallow, making  
Thus our sacrifice of peace.

This the truth each Christian learns,  
Bread into his flesh he turns,  
To his precious blood the wine:

Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives,  
But a dauntless faith believes,  
Resting on a pow'r divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden  
Priceless things to sense forbidden;  
Signs, not things are all we see:

Blood is poured and flesh is broken,  
Yet in either wondrous token  
Christ entire we know to be.

Whoso of this food partakes,  
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;  
Christ is whole to all that taste:

Thousands are, as one, receivers,  
One, as thousands of believers,  
Eats of him who cannot waste.

Bad and good the feast are sharing,  
Of what divers dooms preparing,  
Endless death, or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation,  
See how like participation  
Is with unlike issues rife.

When the sacrament is broken,  
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,  
That each sever'd outward token  
doth the very whole contain.

Nought the precious gift divides,  
Breaking but the sign betides  
Jesus still the same abides,  
still unbroken does remain.

Lo! the angel's food is given  
To the pilgrim who has striven;  
see the children's bread from heaven,  
which on dogs may not be spent.

Truth the ancient types fulfilling,  
Isaac bound, a victim willing,  
Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,

manna to the fathers sent.  
Very bread, good shepherd, tend us,  
Jesu, of your love befriend us,  
You refresh us, you defend us,  
Your eternal goodness send us  
In the land of life to see.

You who all things can and know,  
Who on earth such food bestow,  
Grant us with your saints, though lowest,  
Where the heav'nly feast you show,  
Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia.

**ARTWORK:** *The Last Supper*, Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (d. 1929)

By portraying Christ luminous and gazing directly at the viewer, Dagnan-Bouveret captures the abiding presence of Christ in the Holy Mass. He is at the center of the activity and life in this painting. The Apostles gather around, seated, passively receptive to the gift of His sacrifice. Christ alone stands and acts as our great High Priest, joining their prayers to His in a great offering to the Father Almighty.



**ARTWORK:** *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (Ghent Altarpiece)

See Doctrine 27: The Sacramental Economy, "Teaching through Beauty"

**ARTWORK:** *La Última Cena*, Juan de Juanes (1562)

De Juanes identifies each of the Twelve Apostles in his painting. Judas inattentively twists in His seat and tries to leave the supper early, a call to us to give Christ our

reverent and devout attention at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the foreground sits the basin and pitcher that will be used for the washing of the feet.

