

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Many Catholics forget that the mass, as an event, is a true sacrifice, and maybe they don't know what a sacrifice is or why it is so important. The following is a **simple explanation**.

Throughout the ages, mankind has always praised whatever god they believed in by offering sacrifices to them. A sacrifice is freely giving up a treasured possession to the god one believes in. In the past, this used to be an animal, such as the best in the flock or herd, or, if a farmer, the finest wheat, corn, or fruit.

Some ancient civilisations even had human sacrifices. The actual ceremony was always conducted using four things:

- 1. The treasured possession to be sacrificed.**
- 2. An altar on which to sacrifice the offering.**
- 3. A priest or special person to conduct the sacrificial ceremony.**
- 4. The deity being offered a sacrifice.**

Some great old civilisations, such as Romans, Greeks, Hebrews, Babylonians, and Egyptians, all used the ritual of sacrifice to praise and glorify their god. It is no surprise, therefore, that when Jesus set up his church, the most important ritual devised by the early Christians was: **THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.**

At the 'Last Supper' and after he had risen from the dead, he gave the Apostles the means to praise and glorify God. He gave them the power to change bread and wine into his body and blood and told them to do it in his memory. He didn't ask them to do this, he told them to do it.

To ensure that people knew for sure that their sins against God had been forgiven, Jesus also gave the Apostles and their descendants down the ages the power to absolve a person's sins. Knowing that God had now forgiven them their sins, they could do as Jesus commanded: receive his body and blood as bread and wine. But how does all this fit in with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

During the mass, bread and wine are consecrated into the body and blood of Jesus, a great gift from God to man. Immediately after this, and to thank God in the best possible way, **THE PRIEST THEN OFFERS IT BACK TO GOD AS A SACRIFICE.**

There is no greater way of glorifying and praising God than this. The whole mass ceremony is set up to show our love of God.

IN VERY SIMPLE TERMS, IT CONSISTS OF:

The Introductory Rite - the start of the mass (Including the Penitentiary Rite). This is where we make peace with God by humbly and sincerely saying we're sorry for having offended him. We do this to show God that we want to participate in the mass, hopefully with our souls free from sin.

THEN WE HAVE THE TWO MAIN PARTS OF THE MASS:

Part 1. The Liturgy of the Word: This is where we learn about God and what he's always wanted from mankind. It's where stories from the Bible are read out. They show God's love for us in many ways and how we should show our love for him. People forget that the Bible is our only source of the WORD OF GOD.

Part 2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist: After making friends with God and hearing about his love for us, we are now ready to receive the body and blood of his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Holy Communion. The priest uses the special powers and process handed down to him through the ages, called THE CONSECRATION, to convert bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, but before we receive these as Jesus told us to, the priest offers them back to God as a very special sacrifice. After this, we receive them in Holy Communion.

In the Concluding rite, immediately after communion, following the cleaning of the sacred vessels used during it, the priest says 'The Prayer After Communion'. This is followed by a blessing, after which the mass is ended.

The mass is a very sacred and special ceremony. When people understand this, they take part in the mass eagerly. Because the priest offers the greatest of all sacrifices, that is, the body and blood of Christ to God immediately after the Consecration, the true title of the mass is:

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.