

THE MASS IS A SACRIFICE

I was talking to some of my friends in our parish, who were surprised when I mentioned that the correct name of the mass is:

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Some said they didn't know this; to them, it was just THE MASS. Others asked why it's called this. I said it was because of the sacrifice we make immediately after the consecration, and that is why we need an altar and a priest. Both are needed in a sacrifice as well as a sacrificial offering.

I was then asked what sacrificial offering.

I was not surprised by all this because I'd often encountered such reactions. Even at school we were never taught about the structure of the mass, or even what each part of this structure is for. The following is a **SIMPLE EXPLANATION**

The mass has two main parts. These are called:

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD. THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

A liturgy is the words and actions of a religious service. Some small additions to these two major parts help us enjoy participating.

The first extra bit is just before the Liturgy of the Word. It's called: The introductory Rites contain what is called The Penitential Act

This extra bit right at the start of the mass is to help us become friends with God before we take part in the mass. In it, we all admit out loud that we're sinners and ask God to forgive us, and so does the priest.

We end this brief but very effective introduction by saying the Gloris prayer and the priest saying a small prayer called the Preface. We're now ready to start the first major part of the mass.

For us to know about God's great promise of eternal life for our spiritual souls, only he could tell us.

This he did in various ways, directly, through dreams, visions or through holy men called prophets. He also sent his Son to show and tell us how we could live in ways which would help us keep God's commandments.

The prophets and disciples of Jesus wrote down all this, and it is in what we call the **Holy Bible**. To ensure we know about this, the first major part of the mass is all about readings from the Bible.

They have been cleverly organised so that at each mass, a special message is given to us through these readings. If we do not understand the message, the priest's following sermon is usually designed to do it.

After the sermon, we all say out loud the "I Believe.....", prayer of faith and belief.

This is followed by what are called the Bidding Prayers, which are our requests to God. Finally, we all say the Hail Mary prayer out loud to end this first major part of the mass.

Without all this, many of us would never know what God wanted from us and how we can achieve it because many of us do not own a Bible, and if we do, how many of us read it?

This second major part of the mass is all about converting bread and wine into our Lord Jesus Christ's body and blood for us all to take in HOLY COMMUNION.

It starts with gifts being brought to the priest in the Sanctuary, two of which are always bread and wine. The priest then prepares them for the consecration.

When he's ready, he starts what is known as the EUCHARISTIC PRAYER, during which the Consecration is executed, and the bread and wine become the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is done because Jesus, at the Last Supper, told us not to ask us to do it in memory of him.

This is a tremendous gift for us, and the best way we can thank God for allowing us to do this is to offer a sacrifice to him.

Before doing anything else, the priest offers up to God as a sacrifice, the body and blood of his Son, the greatest gift we could ever offer. Hence the name 'The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass'.

The priest then continues the Eucharistic Prayer, thanking God and asking for his favours. It ends when he says that beautiful prayer called THE DOXOLOGY. We now get ready to receive Christ in Holy Communion and start by saying the prayer Jesus taught us called THE OUR FATHER out loud.

This is followed by prayers for peace in the world and with one another, after which the priest gives us all Holy Communion. We now have Jesus within us, but he is more significant than we are, so we become part of him. What a fantastic situation to be in. We have Jesus to ourselves, and we can ask him to consider anything we desire.

After Holy Communion, the priest says a final prayer, blesses us and tells us the mass is ended.

No wonder THE HOLY Baptist of **THE MASS** is the greatest of all the Catholic liturgies.