

The Holy Eucharist

Q. 236. What is a sacrifice to God?

A sacrifice to God consists in a lawful priest offering some befitting gift to God, as a victim in the name of the people, in order to acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty over creation.

In a sacrifice, man gives to God something of his own property; this surrender occurs through real or symbolic destruction, whereby the gift is removed from its usefulness to man. In this manner, man recognizes that God is the Lord of everything he has. This homage is worship (the act of adoration). A sacrifice may also express one's thanks to God for His blessings and implore Him to continue His goodness.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament are divided into bloody and unbloody offerings. The material of the bloody sacrifices was the animals of the herd, such as cattle, sheep, and goats. According to the reasons for the offering, sacrifices were divided into holocausts or burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings. Holocausts, the burning and offering up of an entire victim to God, served to remind the ancient Hebrews of God's supreme dominion over His creatures and of the need for inner purity and complete self-surrender to His will. Sin offerings were made in atonement for sin. A peace offering was a thanksgiving or praise offering.

Just as the burnt offering and sin offering were types (foreshadowings) of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, likewise, the peace offering was a type of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Passover was one of three major feasts of ancient Judaism that was celebrated every year, the others being the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles. It was obligatory at the Passover for every male Israelite to appear before the sanctuary of the tabernacle (or Temple) at Jerusalem. Before sunset on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, an unblemished lamb was to be slaughtered in the court of the Temple, and after sunset, this lamb, which was roasted, was eaten with unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and wine. During the meal various psalms were recited or sung.

The Passover was a memorial commanded by God, in memory of and in thanksgiving for the deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. At that time, the angel of the Passover "passed over" the homes of the Israelites which were marked with the blood of the lamb that had been sacrificed. But the angel put to

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 236. Eph 5:1-2; Heb 9:11-14, 23-26.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 236. Paragraphs 433, 1032, 1334, **1539-1540**, 2581.

death the first-born son of each Egyptian family as a punishment from God. It was the most terrible of the ten plagues which God sent to the Egyptians for refusing to release the Israelites from slavery.

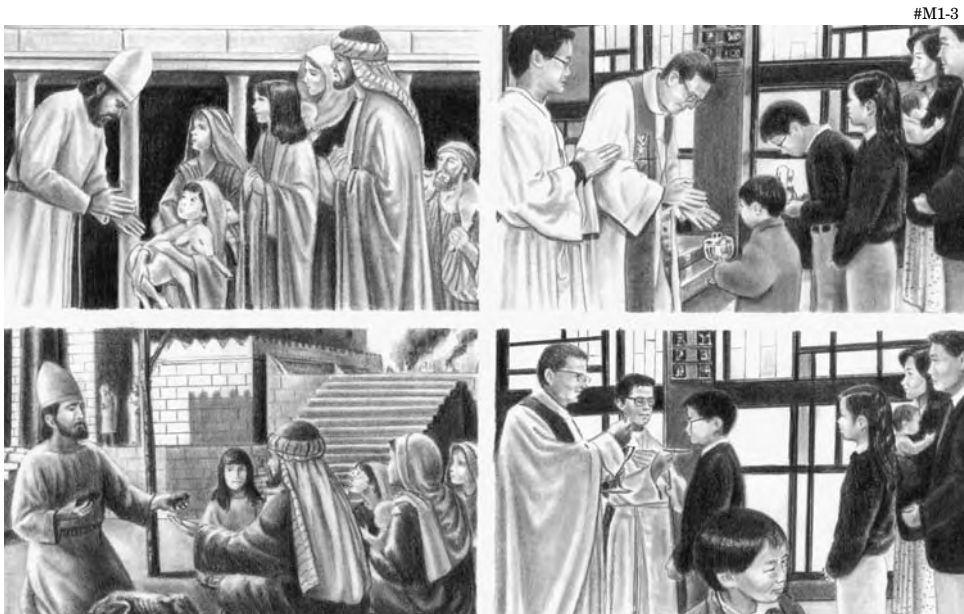
The lamb sacrificed for the feast is taken by St. John and St. Paul as a type (figure) of Jesus Christ as the Victim. Indeed, Jesus is called the Lamb; this term refers to His innocence.

When John the Baptist caught sight of Jesus coming toward him, he exclaimed: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

St. Paul told the Corinthians: “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The Passover lamb was a real sacrifice, a combination of the sin and peace offerings; similarly, our Lord died for us as a sin offering on the Cross, and gives Himself to us as a peace offering in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

It was during the Passover meal which Jesus ate with His Apostles that He instituted the Holy Eucharist. He is the true Lamb of God, sacrificed on the Cross and offered again in an unbloody manner at Mass; He is also the food of our souls in Holy Communion.



What is the most perfect and most pleasing sacrifice that we can offer to God?

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, is the most perfect and most pleasing sacrifice we can offer to God.

Indeed, any other sacrifice we offer is pleasing to God only when we, being in the state of grace, offer it in union with the supreme sacrifice of His Son.

How can we offer Jesus to God on our behalf?

When we worship God at Mass, we baptized Catholics, as sharers in Christ's priesthood, are privileged to participate in His eternal sacrifice of Himself to the Father on our behalf. As members of the priesthood of the faithful, we offer not only ourselves to the Father, along with our intentions, but especially that which is most precious and acceptable to Him, namely His Divine Son, the perfect Victim Who takes away the sins of the world.



Sacred Scripture

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. *Genesis 14:18*

And you shall offer the passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place which the Lord will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in hurried flight—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. *Deuteronomy 16:2-3*

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. *Hebrews 5:8-10*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1334 In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in sacrifice among the first fruits of the earth as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to the Creator. But they also received a new significance in the context of the Exodus: the unleavened bread that Israel eats every year at Passover commemorates the haste of the departure that liberated them from Egypt; the remembrance of the manna in the desert will always recall to Israel that it lives by the bread of the Word of God;¹ their daily bread is the fruit of the promised land, the pledge of God's faithfulness to his promises. The "cup of blessing"² at the end of the Jewish Passover meal adds to the festive joy of wine an eschatological dimension: the messianic expectation of the rebuild-

ing of Jerusalem. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he gave a new and definitive meaning to the blessing of the bread and the cup.

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Vatican Council II

The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation and active charity. *The Church, 10*

The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ our Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved his task principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby “dying, he destroyed our death, and rising, restored our life.” *Sacred Liturgy, 5*

Summary Prayer

Jesus our Savior, You redeemed us by Your death and Resurrection. You went up to Jerusalem to suffer and die on the Cross, and so enter Your glory only to bring Your Church to the Passover feast of heaven.

You were lifted high on the Cross, the tree of life; give its fruit to those who have been reborn in Baptism. On the Cross, You forgave the repentant thief; forgive us our sins.

We thank You, Jesus, for bringing us life by Your death on the Cross, the supreme sacrifice offered to Your Father in atonement for our sins.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were only symbols of this one true sacrifice. By Your death, You raised us to life. You have shown us Your love and fidelity and have made us new creations by Your Passion. Keep us from falling again into sin. Help us to deny ourselves, yet not deny those in need.

Savior of mankind, through Your sacrifice of the Cross, offered again in each Holy Mass, bring us sinners into Your Kingdom. All power and glory be to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

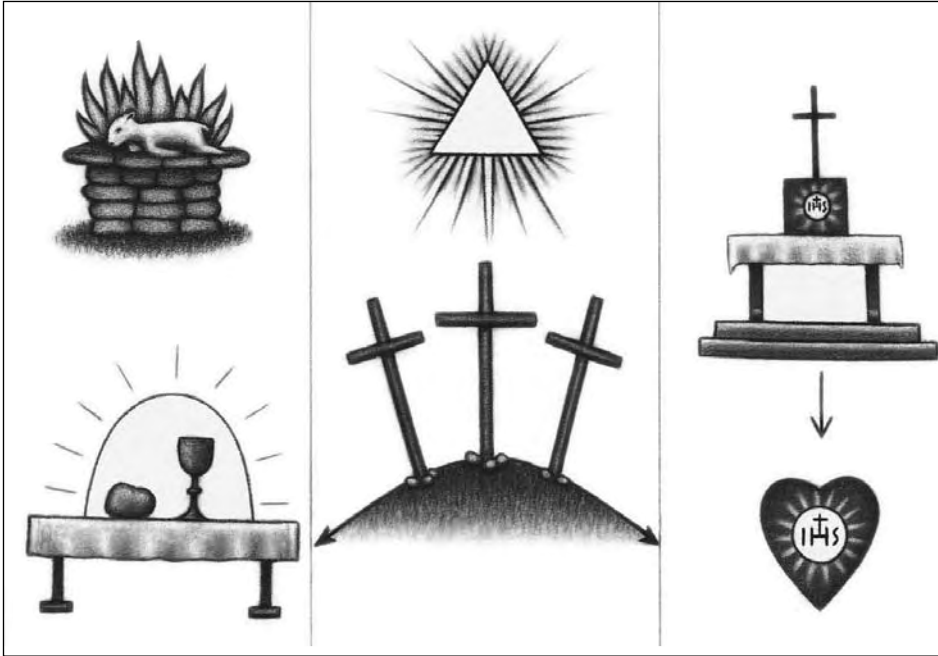
1. A sacrifice is offered to God in order to acknowledge His absolute sovereignty over creatures. What are some other reasons for offering a sacrifice to God? When is our sacrifice pleasing to Him?
2. Meditate on this passage from Scripture: “For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). How can this Scripture be made real in your life?
3. When you pray the Our Father at Mass, ask God to prepare you for receiving Jesus in Holy Communion and to help you to do His will more perfectly that day.

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Catechism by Diagram

#E4-31



The Sacrifice of the Mass. Left: The word “sacrifice” means “to make holy.” A thing was made holy by being taken from human ownership and use, and offered to God in a symbolic act of giving. God told Moses the kinds of sacrifices that were to be offered to Him. Usually an animal was slain upon the altar and consumed in fire. This destruction of a gift is a sacrifice. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbols of the true sacrifice of God’s Son on Calvary, instituted at the Last Supper and renewed in the Mass (altar). Middle: The destruction of the Victim took place on the Cross, when Jesus redeemed all mankind by shedding His blood. Right: Each Mass is a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. In the Mass (altar), Jesus the Eternal Priest offers Himself, the perfect Victim, the infinitely precious Gift, to God for us, and gives Himself as food for our souls in Holy Communion (host in the heart).

Q. 237. What is the Holy Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Under the appearance of bread and wine, the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ are really, truly, and substantially present for the nourishment of souls and as a sacrifice of the Church.

Sacred Scripture

“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.” *John 6:27*

“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.” *John 6:54-56*

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 237. Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-26.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 237. Paragraphs 1322-1332.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1193 Sunday, the “Lord’s Day,” is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist because it is the day of the Resurrection. It is the pre-eminent day of the liturgical assembly, the day of the Christian family, and the day of joy and rest from work. Sunday is “the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year.”¹

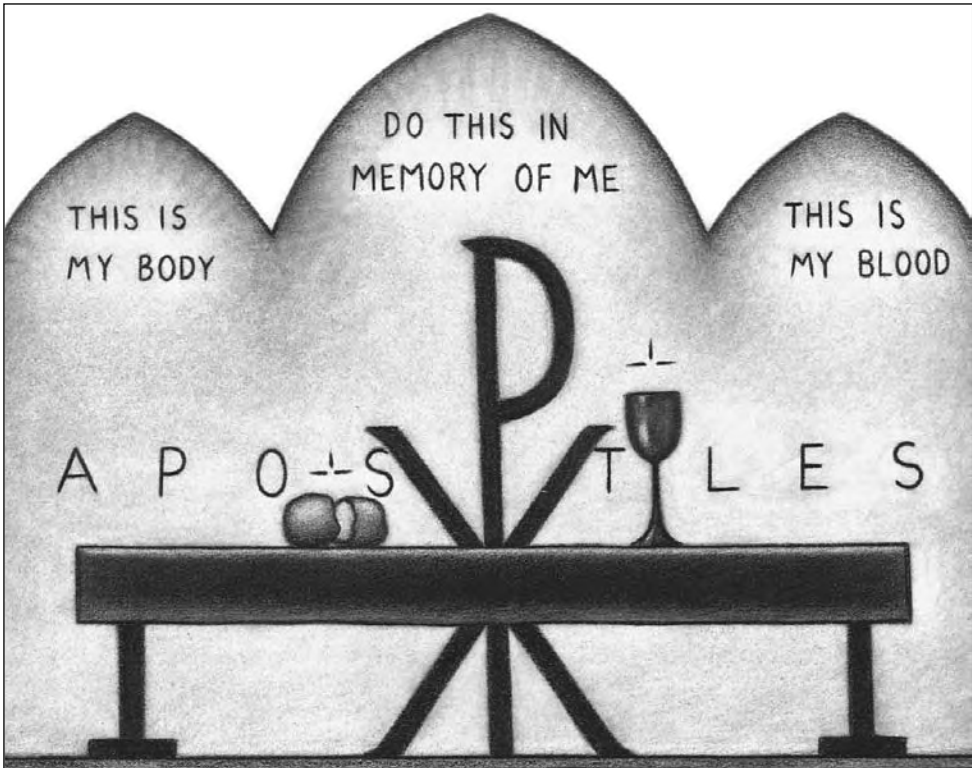
1324 The Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.”² “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”³

Vatican Council II

[Christ] is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,” but especially in the eucharistic species. *Sacred Liturgy*, 7

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-32



Institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Mass is the Church’s way of doing what Jesus (monogram) did at the Last Supper (table). Taking bread and giving thanks, Jesus broke it and gave it to His Apostles, saying “This is my body...Do this in memory of me.” He did the same with the cup after eating, saying “This is my blood.” He gave the Apostles both the command and the power to bring the Eucharist to us as a sacrifice. When Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me,” His words and power made Him really present under the appearance of bread and wine, so that His Apostles received Jesus in that meal. The Apostles then gave Christ to the People of God in the Eucharist. The Church re-creates the Last Supper at Holy Mass.

Summary Prayer

Father, You have given us life on this earth and have blessed us with the grace of redemption through the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Your beloved Son. Bestow Your greatest blessing on us, the fullness of eternal life with You.

God our Father, to show the way of salvation, You chose to put the standard of the Cross before us; You fulfilled the ancient prophecies in Christ's Passover from death to life. Do not let us rouse Your indignation by sin, but, rather, through the sacrifice of ourselves, with Him in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, may He give us everlasting life.

He promised: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if anyone 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 6:51). May we come to possess His divine life completely in the Kingdom where He lives for ever. Amen.

Q. 238. Why does the Church celebrate the Eucharist?

The Church celebrates the Eucharist in obedience to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). At this time, Jesus gave the Apostles both the command and the power to bring the Eucharist to us.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the Church's way of doing what Jesus did at the Last Supper. St. Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Church does this to remember Jesus and to be reunited with Him. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave the Apostles His own Body and Blood, under the appearance of bread and wine. He then asked them to remember Him always by doing this same thing among themselves.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1356 If from the beginning Christians have celebrated the Eucharist and in a form whose substance has not changed despite the great diversity of times and liturgies, it is because we know ourselves to be bound by the command the Lord gave on the eve of his Passion: "Do this in remembrance of me."⁷¹

Vatican Council II

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond

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of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. *Sacred Liturgy*, 47

#E4-22



Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Why does the Church celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass? How is Christ present in the Eucharistic celebration?
2. In the Eucharistic celebration, the words of Jesus are recalled: “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20). What does this mean to you? In your role as a parent, son or daughter, sister or brother, student, worker, or friend, how can you imitate Jesus in His perfect self-giving to the Father and to mankind through His death on the Cross?
3. Write a simple prayer, expressing your gratitude to Jesus for giving you His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist to strengthen you and all of the members of the Catholic Church.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Jesus, the Last Supper was the solemn opening of Your holy Passion; whereby You suffered death for the world's salvation. For the first time You pronounced the words of sublime mystery whereby You changed bread and wine into Your Sacred Body and Blood.

The Eucharist is a memorial of Your Passion and death. The flesh which You gave to Your Apostles to eat at the Last Supper was that of a sacrificial Victim: the blood was that blood which would be shed on the Altar of the Cross. Thus, the sacrifice of the Cross was offered beforehand in a spiritual manner.

You combined the institution of the Holy Eucharist with the celebration of the legal Passover, immediately before Your Passion. No Old Testament type (or prefiguration) symbolizes the Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament so closely as does the paschal lamb, which is at once a sacrifice and a communion.

Jesus, You bequeathed to the Church its choicest treasure and chief riches—the Blessed Sacrament. It is its very heart, of which every Mass that is celebrated is a pulsation, sending its lifeblood—Your own Blood—into every member of its body, imparting life, growth, and well-being.

You gave the Apostles and those who would follow them, the bishops and priests of the Church, the power and the command to do, at Holy Mass, what You Yourself had done. Thus, You continue to keep Your promise to give Your Body and Blood. At the words of consecration spoken by the priest, “This is my body... This is my blood,” what takes place can only be verified by faith. We believe that You, the Son of God, become present under the outward forms of bread and wine. You change them into Your Body and Blood through the agency of Your priests. Only the appearances of bread and wine remain.

Your last will is addressed not only to the Apostles who are to consecrate the Eucharist, but also to the faithful who are to receive It. Since the salvation of souls is the great desire of Your Sacred Heart, You certainly want people to use the means You have given to save their souls. May we always receive it with great love and devotion, for Your greater honor and glory, and for the salvation of souls. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 66

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 236. What is a sacrifice to God?

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 3, 10, 11, 17;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 40-41;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 9;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 47-58.*

Q. 237. What is the Holy Eucharist?

*Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Vatican II, sect. 21-26;
Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 3, 10, 11, 17, 26-28;
On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 1, 2, 5;
Gospel of Life, John Paul II, sect. 25;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 3, 9;
On Social Concern, John Paul II, sect. 48;
The Relationship Between Faith and Reason, John Paul II, sect. 13;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 10, 47-58.*

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On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 2, 3, 5, 13;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 2;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 47-58.*



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 236: A. What is the most perfect and most pleasing sacrifice that we can offer to God?
B. How can we offer Jesus to God on our behalf?
- Q. 237: What does the word “Eucharist” mean?
- Q. 238: Is it a mortal sin to deliberately miss Mass on Sundays when a person could reasonably attend? In other words, is it a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass when, for example, a person is not seriously ill or prevented from attending due to the fact that there is no church within driving or walking distance or if no car or public transportation is available?
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