

The Sacrifice of the Mass

Q. 241. What is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not only a ritual which reminds us of the sacrifice of Calvary, but through the ministry of ordained priests, Christ continues, until the end of time, His sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner.

The Holy Mass is the sacrifice by which the Church not only remembers Jesus Christ, but really brings Him, His saving death, and His Resurrection into the present, so that His followers might become part of it. The Church can do this because Jesus is united to His Church in the Holy Spirit. When the Catholic Church celebrates the Eucharist, Jesus is truly there, and it is He Who does once more what He did at the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper, our Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood, to continue for all time by His sacrifice of the Cross until He would come again. In the Mass, Jesus gave His Church a remembrance of His death and Resurrection, which is a true sacrifice. In the name of the whole Church, the priest offers the Sacrifice of Jesus in an unbloody and sacramental manner in the Holy Eucharist. The priest, acting in the Person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice and offers it to the Father in the name of all the people.

The Mass is a prayer to the Father, in which we give Him thanks and praise for the merciful redemption He has offered us in His Son, Jesus Christ. We also ask forgiveness for our sins and beg the Father's blessing upon ourselves and our fellowman.

The Mass is a sacrifice because it makes present our Lord's own offering of Himself to His Father, on the Cross. When we participate in the Mass, in memory of Him, we enter into that offering and become a part of it.

The Mass also makes present to us Jesus' Resurrection because His sacrifice establishes a bond of friendship and love between the Father and His children. Just as we share in Jesus' death at Mass, so we also share in the new life of the Spirit which was bestowed upon Jesus in His Resurrection.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is very important because it brings together all of the gifts which the Father has given us in Jesus Christ. It brings into our lives the very presence of our Lord Jesus, His sacrifice on the Cross, and the new life of the Holy Spirit which He opened to us by His Resurrection.

Sacred Scripture

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. *1 Corinthians 11:26*

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

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1367 The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: “The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.” “And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner...this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.”⁷¹

Vatican Council II

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper.

The liturgy, in its turn, moves the faithful filled with “the paschal sacraments” to be “one in holiness”; it prays that “they hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith.” The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful and sets them aflame with Christ's insistent love. *Sacred Liturgy*, 10

Summary Prayer

Lord our God, in the Eucharist we proclaim the death and Resurrection of Christ. Make us partners in His suffering and lead us to share His happiness and the glory of eternal life. May the power of this sacrament give us courage to proclaim His death and Resurrection also in our lives. May our obedient service bring us to the fullness of Your redemption.

Lord God, in the blood of Christ You have ratified a new and everlasting covenant with Your people and have renewed it in the Sacrament of the Altar. We offer You the Sacrifice of the Mass by which Your Son reconciles mankind. Accept this pure sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. May this sacrifice, once offered on the Cross to take away the sins of the world, now free us from our sins.

Most Merciful Father, may the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of Your Son in the Mass, purify us in mind and heart, and make us always eager to serve You. You give us the Body and Blood of Your Son to renew Your life within us. In Your mercy, assure our redemption and bring us to the eternal life we celebrate in this Eucharist.

Heavenly Father, You gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of Your Son's suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood help us to experience the salvation He won for us and the peace of Your Kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

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

1. What is the relationship between the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross?
2. Each time you participate in the Mass, you share in the same Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and in the new life of His Resurrection, and thus experience the continuing work of His redemption in you. How can you

cooperate concretely with Jesus in His work of redemption at home, at school, at work, and in your community?

3. During the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, ask for the specific graces that you need to overcome your sins so that you can fulfill the responsibility of the present moment and cooperate with Jesus in His work of redemption. Slowly and lovingly read the prayer at the end of question 241.

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-56



Remembrance and Sacrifice. Jesus gave His Church a remembrance of His death (cross) and Resurrection. But the Mass is also a true sacrifice. Through the hands of the priest (stole) and in the name of the Church, the sacrifice of Jesus is offered in the Eucharist (altar), in an unbloody and sacramental manner (host, wine in chalice). Only the manner of the offering is different. Christ's offering on the Cross was a bloody sacrifice; the sacrifice of the Mass is an unbloody sacrifice.

Q. 242. What is the liturgy?

The liturgy is seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs which can be perceived by the senses, and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In the liturgy, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.

Sacred Scripture

Worship the Lord in holy array; tremble before him, all the earth! *Psalm 96:9*

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" *Psalm 122:1*

#M1-2

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

1069 The word "liturgy" originally meant a "public work" or a "service in the name of/on behalf of the people." In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in "the work of God."¹ Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.

Vatican Council II

From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree. *Sacred Liturgy*, 7

Q. 243. What is the most important form of all Christian liturgy?

The most important form of all Christian liturgy is the Mass. Within the setting of a Jewish Passover meal, the Lord instituted the Eucharistic sacrificial meal

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

of the New Covenant. It was from this rite that the New Testament liturgy was born.

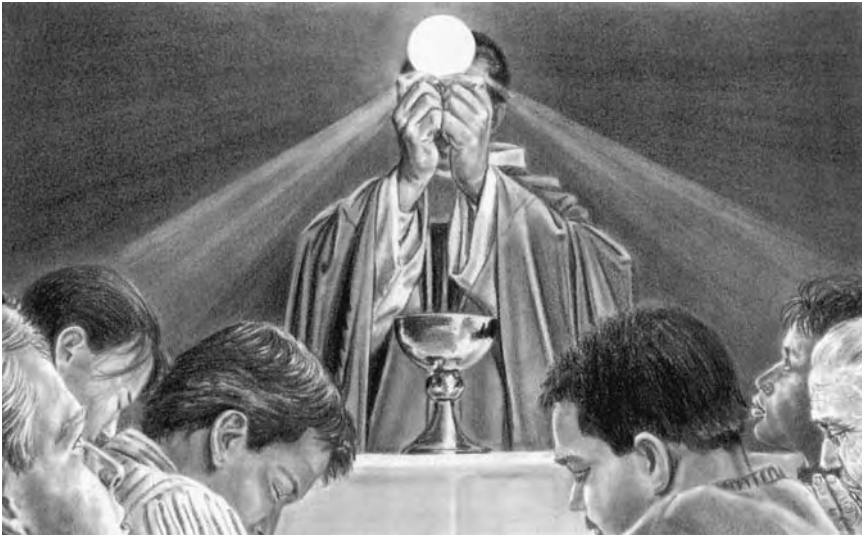
The Passover meal was a ritual. It called for certain foods, including bread and wine, as well as certain prayers and explanations. On the night before He died, Jesus took some of the unleavened bread, offered it to the Father, and said, “This is my body.” He gave His Body to the Apostles to eat. He took a cup of the Passover wine and said, “This is my blood, the blood of the new covenant.” He gave His Blood to the Apostles to drink. He told them, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Obedient to Christ, the Church does what Christ did, in memory of Him. The worship of the Church and its whole inner life have always centered on the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Mass.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1068 It is this mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world: “For it is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that “the work of our redemption is accomplished,” and it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”¹

#J2-341



Summary Prayer

Our Father, at the Last Supper Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, established the unending Sacrifice of the Mass as He sat at table with His Apostles. As the true and eternal High Priest, He offered Himself as a Victim for our deliverance, and taught us to make this offering in His memory.

He offered Himself to You as the spotless Lamb, the acceptable gift that gives You perfect praise.

May our worship in spirit and truth bring us salvation. Help us to live the example of love we celebrate in the Eucharist, that we may come to its fulfillment in Your presence, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Q. 244. What are the two principal parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

The two principal parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are: (1) the Liturgy of the Word and (2) the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Word includes the Scripture readings together with the homily, the Profession of Faith, and the Prayer of the Faithful.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist has three stages: (1) the Offertory rite; (2) the Eucharistic prayer and; (3) the Communion rite. In the Offertory rite, the gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar and are offered to the Lord. In the Eucharistic Prayer, the saving mysteries of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection are recalled by a sacramental action which makes these mysteries present again in the midst of the people. In the Communion rite, the Body and Blood of Christ are received in a sacred meal, to gather in closest unity with Christ those who have received life through Him.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1349 *The Liturgy of the Word* includes “the writings of the prophets,” that is, the Old Testament, and “the memoirs of the apostles” (their letters and the Gospels). After the homily, which is an exhortation to accept this Word as what it truly is, the Word of God,¹ and to put it into practice, come the intercessions for all men, according to the Apostle’s words: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and all who are in high positions.”²

Vatican Council II

The two parts which in a sense go to make up the Mass, viz. the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship. *Sacred Liturgy*, 56

Roman Curia Documents

The Church has arranged the celebration of the Eucharist so that its several parts correspond with the words and actions of Christ.

(a) In the Preparation of the Gifts there are brought to the altar, bread and wine with water, the very same elements which Christ took into his hands.

(b) In the Eucharistic Prayer God is thanked for the whole work of redemption, and the gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ.

(c) In the breaking of one bread the unity of the faithful is signified, and in Communion they receive the Body and Blood of the Lord as the apostles once did from the hands of Christ himself. *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 48 (*Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship*, 1970)

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

Summary Prayer

Heavenly Father, we offer our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord and God, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We have faith that we will receive whatever we ask for in His Name, for this is what He promised: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13).

May we, who honor Jesus in the Mass, enjoy His friendship in this life and be filled with eternal joy in His heavenly Kingdom. May all people find salvation in the name of Jesus. May He be praised and honored now and forever, especially in the Holy Eucharist. Amen.

#E4-58

**Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise**

1. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are the two principal parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Briefly describe what happens in each part.
2. In your daily life, how can you help others understand the value of worshipping God as a family through family prayer and as a community through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?
3. In the liturgy, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Christ. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ, why is it important for the members of your family to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with other families from your parish community? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you and the members of your family a strong desire to attend Mass together more often.

Q. 245. Why is the Holy Mass offered?

The Holy Mass is offered to give adoration and glory to God the Father, to give praise and thanks for Christ's immeasurable love for us, to intercede for those in need, and to obtain forgiveness of sins and the remission of the punishment for sins.

Sacred Scripture

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
Acts 2:42, 46-47

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1359 The Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and the Resurrection of Christ. Through Christ the Church can offer the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has made good, beautiful, and just in creation and in humanity.

Roman Curia Document

The celebration of the Mass, as an action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically ordered, is the center of the whole Christian life for the universal Church, the local Church and for each and every one of the faithful. For therein is the culminating action whereby God sanctifies the world in Christ and men worship the Father as they adore him through Christ the Son of God. The mysteries of man's redemption are in some way made present throughout the course of the year by the celebration of Mass. All other sacred celebrations and the activities of the Christian life are related to the Mass; they spring forth from it and culminate in it.
General Instruction on the Roman Missal, Chapter I, 1-3

Vatican Council II

[Christ's] humanity united with the Person of the Word was the instrument of our salvation. Therefore, "in Christ the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth and the fullness of divine worship was given to us." *Sacred Liturgy, 5*

Summary Prayer

Our Father, the Eucharist proclaims the death of Your Son. Each time this memorial sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is accomplished. Make us worthy to celebrate the mysteries of Holy Mass.

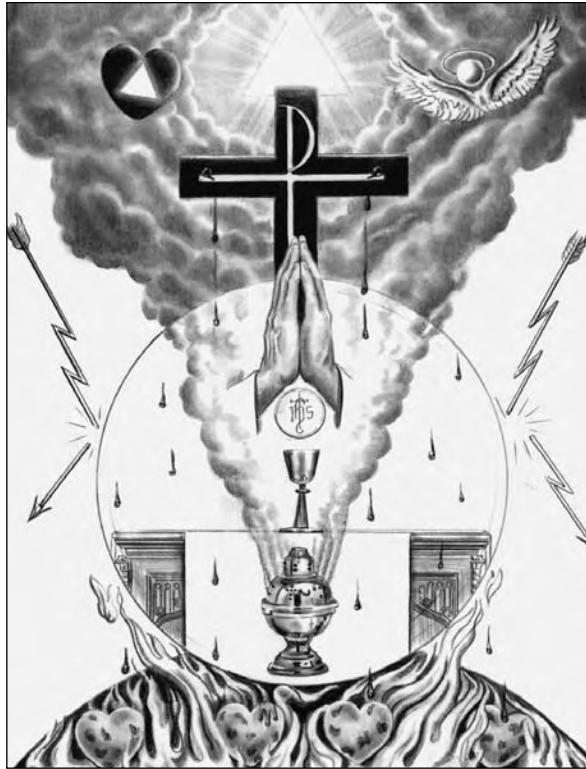
Increase our faith in its saving power and strengthen our hope in the life it promises as we celebrate this mystery of the suffering and death of Your Son. May we receive new life from the Supper Your Son gave us in this world.

May we find full contentment in the meal we hope to share in the eternal life which He won for us, in Your heavenly Kingdom. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-83



The Faithful and the Eucharist. The faithful on this earth (circle) join in the offering of the Eucharist and give themselves, all their works, and their sufferings to God (triangle). United with Jesus, the divine Victim of Calvary, they offer adoration to God (incense that rises to God). They join the angels and saints (heart with triangle) in heaven in praising and thanking God in a manner which is most worthy of Him. They ask (folded hands) pardon for their sins and make atonement for them, that they may not be punished (broken arrows) by God. They beg for God's blessing, through the Blood of Jesus which was shed for the redemption of the world on the Cross of Calvary, in order to obtain grace. Through the Mass, the faithful on earth can also help the suffering souls (hearts with spots) in Purgatory.

Q. 246. How do lay people participate in the Mass?

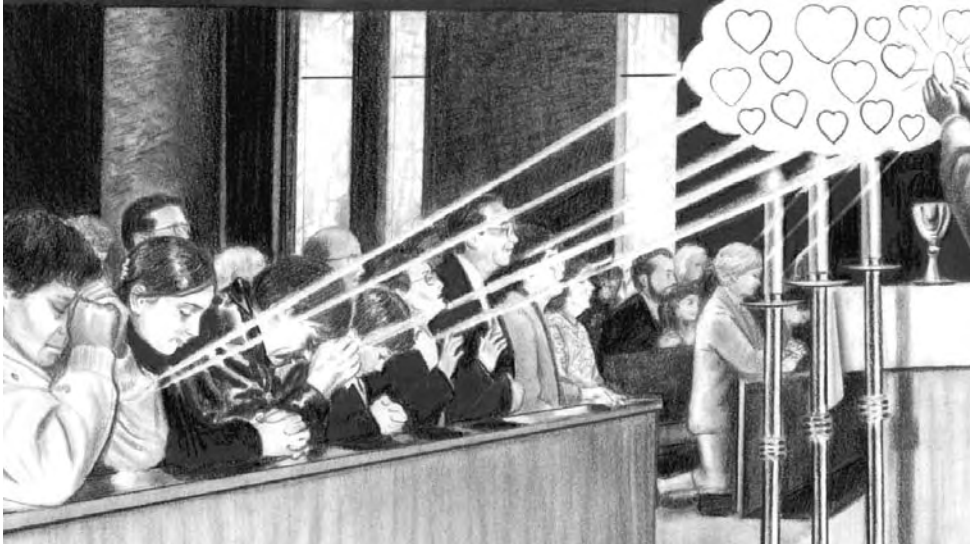
Lay people participate in the Mass by the reception of Holy Communion, and by fully exercising their status as members of the priesthood of the faithful. For example, they offer the Victim, Jesus Christ, and themselves, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him.

Sacred Scripture

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. *Romans 12:1*

Be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. *1 Peter 2:5*

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



Catechism of the Catholic Church

901 “Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit—indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born—all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives.”¹

Vatican Council II

Through the ministry of priests the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the only mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests’ hands in the name of the whole Church in an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord himself come. *Priests, 2*

Christ, indeed, always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through him offers worship to the eternal Father. *Sacred Liturgy, 7*

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2:9; 4-5), have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism. *Sacred Liturgy, 14*

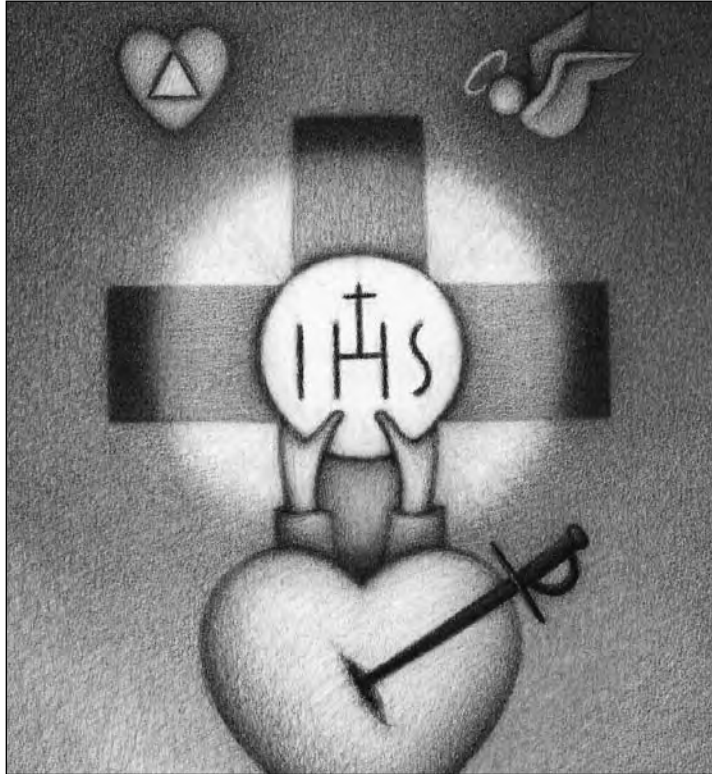
Roman Curia Document

The celebration of the Mass... is the center of the whole Christian life for the universal Church, the local Church and for each and every one of the faithful... It is therefore of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, be so arranged that everybody—ministers and people—may take their own proper part in it. For thus they will more abundantly draw from it those fruits which our Lord intended them to derive when he instituted the Eucharist as the sacrifice of his Body and Blood and entrusted it to his beloved spouse, the Church, as a memorial of his death and resurrection.

The best way to achieve this will be to consider the particular character and circumstances of the community, and then to organize the details of the celebration in a way that will lead them to full, active and conscious participation. This implies a participation that will involve them in both body and soul, and which will inspire them with faith, hope and charity. This is what the Church desires; this is what the nature of the celebration demands; it is this to which the faithful have both the right and duty by reason of their baptism. *General Instruction on the Roman Missal, Chapter I, 1-3*

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-36



Offering in Union with Christ. Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful (heart pierced with sword) is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ (cross). Jesus is the only Mediator, Who in the name of the whole Church, is offered sacramentally (hands of priest) in the Eucharist (host) and in an unbloody manner. The faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist and give themselves and all their works and sufferings to God. Nourished with the Bread of Life in Holy Communion (triangle inside of heart), they become a people more acceptable to God and filled with greater love of God and neighbor. They join the angels and saints in heaven in giving praise to God.

Summary Prayer

Jesus, Victim for our sins, You trusted Your Father's protection and kept silent when You were tormented. Give us that same confidence, and we will gladly suffer with You and for You. We offer the Father our sacrifice of praise, and walk before Him in the light of Your truth and love.

At Mass we place the offering of our lives before You. Send Your Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts, so that our offering may be acceptable, in union with Yours, for the glory of the Father. May the gifts we offer in faith and love be continual sacrifices in Your honor, and thus truly become our Eucharist and our salvation.

Lord Jesus, with confidence in Your love, we come bringing the gift of ourselves and all we have and do and suffer, as a sacrifice to Your Father; may our gifts be one with Your own sacrifice. Renew Your peace and love within us, that we may give Him perfect worship in Holy Mass. By the mystery of this Eucharist, purify us and renew Your life within us and prepare us to celebrate Your coming in eternity. May You be praised and glorified now and forever. Amen.

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

1. The celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the center of the whole Christian life. Give four important reasons why the Holy Mass is offered.
2. Make a list of steps that you can take to prepare yourself properly for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In addition, make a list of dispositions (e.g., gratitude, love, sorrow for sins, etc.) that you should keep in your heart so that you can participate more fully at Mass.
3. Pray that more and more families will be led to the sacrament of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in leading other families to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Father, by the Blood of Your own Son, You have set all men free and have saved us from death. For Your glory and for our salvation, You appointed Jesus Christ eternal High Priest. May the people He gained for You by His blood come to share in the power of His Cross and Resurrection by celebrating His memorial in the Eucharist.

Continue Your work of love within us, that by constantly celebrating the mystery of our salvation in the unbloody renewal of His sacrifice of the Cross at Mass, we may reach the eternal life it promises. May the Blood of our Savior be for us a fountain of water springing up to eternal life.

By sharing in this sacrifice which Your Son commanded us to offer as His memorial, may we become with Him an everlasting gift to You. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 68

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 241. What is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 3, 10, 11, 17, 50;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6, 10, 47-58, 80-82;
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. 9.

Q. 242. What is the liturgy?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11, 50;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 1-4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14-58, 102-130.

Q. 243. What is the most important form of all Christian liturgy?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11, 50;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 6-10, 14-20, 47-58.

Q. 244. What are the two principal parts of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 47-58.

Q. 245. Why is the Holy Mass offered?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 11, 13;
On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 9;
On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 62;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 47-58.

Q. 246. How do lay people participate in the Mass?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11;
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. 2, 7, 9, 12;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 14, 47-58.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 241: Is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass a sacrifice apart from the Sacrifice of Calvary?
- Q. 242: Why do the Eastern Catholic Churches refer to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as “The Liturgy,” and not simply as “a liturgy,” i.e., as one liturgy among many?
- Q. 243: Is the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, i.e., the “Breviary or the Divine Office,” limited to bishops, priests, deacons and Religious?
- Q. 244: In addition to the gifts of bread and wine brought to the altar during the offertory stage of the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the Mass, is there anything else that should be offered to the Father through Jesus in union with the Holy Spirit?
- Q. 245: Is the Christian’s celebration on Sunday the same as the Jewish sabbath on Saturday?
- Q. 246: What is the priesthood of the faithful?