

The Mass: Remembrance and Sacrifice

Q. 247. Why is the Mass both a sacrifice and a sacred meal?

The Mass is both a sacrifice and a sacred meal because it is an unbloody representation of the sacrifice of the Cross; in application of its sacred power, the Lord is immolated in the Sacrifice of the Mass. When the words of consecration are said, this immolation (sacrifice of Christ) becomes present in a sacramental form under the appearances of bread and wine and becomes the spiritual food of the faithful.

Sacred Scripture

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.” *John 6:35*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1383 *The altar*, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us. “For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?”¹ asks St. Ambrose. He says elsewhere, “The altar represents the body [of Christ] and the Body of Christ is on the altar.”² The liturgy expresses this unity of sacrifice and communion in many prayers. Thus the Roman Church prays in its anaphora:

“We entreat you, almighty God, that by the hands of your holy Angel this offering may be borne to your altar in heaven in the sight of your divine majesty, so that as we receive in communion at this altar the most holy Body and Blood of your Son, we may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.”³

Vatican Council II

The eucharistic celebration is the center of the assembly of the faithful over which the priest presides. Hence priests teach the faithful to offer the divine victim to God the Father in the sacrifice of the Mass and with the victim to make an offering of their whole life.

For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through his flesh—that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit. Thus men are invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation with Christ. *Priests, 5*

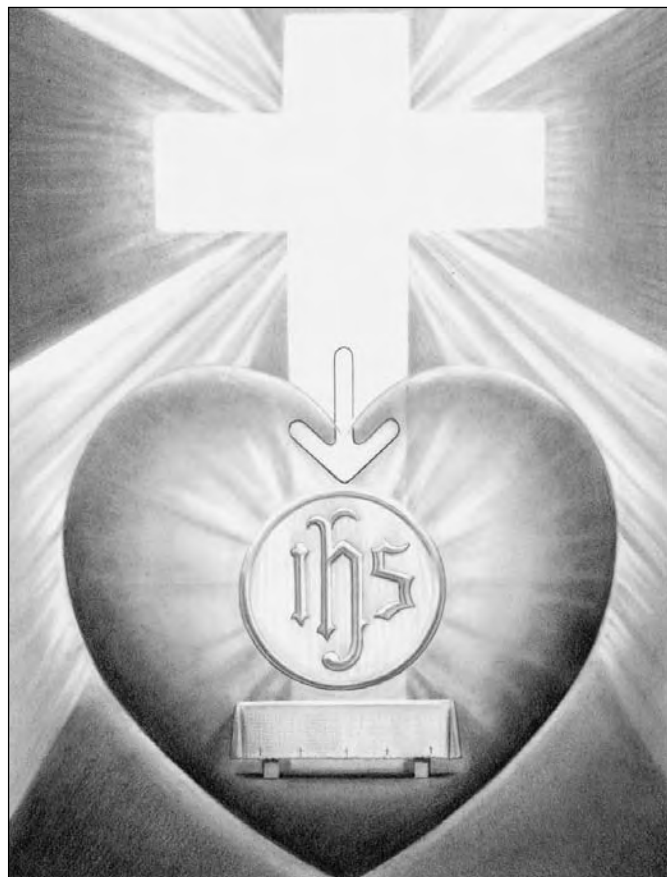
Papal Documents

“In an unbloody representation of the sacrifice of the Cross and in application of its saving power, the Lord is immolated in the Sacrifice of the Mass when, through the words of consecration, He becomes present in a sacramental form under the appearances of bread and wine to be the spiritual food of the faithful.” *Paul VI, The Mystery of Faith, (Mysterium Fidei), 34*

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

Catechism by Diagram

#E4-55



The Sacrificial Meal. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus offers Himself (altar) to His Father as He did on the Cross, though in a sacramental way (host—IHS = IESUS HOMINUM SALVATOR, Latin for “Jesus Savior of Mankind”), as the Bread of Life. We are nourished with the Victim of the sacrifice of the Cross because, at this sacrificial meal, we recall what happened at the Last Supper and actually partake of the Body and Blood of the Victim of our redemption (arrow from cross to host). Christ continually makes us one body with Himself (host in heart). The Eucharist is a transforming food which continues to make us like Christ, Who dwells in us by His grace.

Q. 248. Why is the Mass the one sacrifice of Christ?

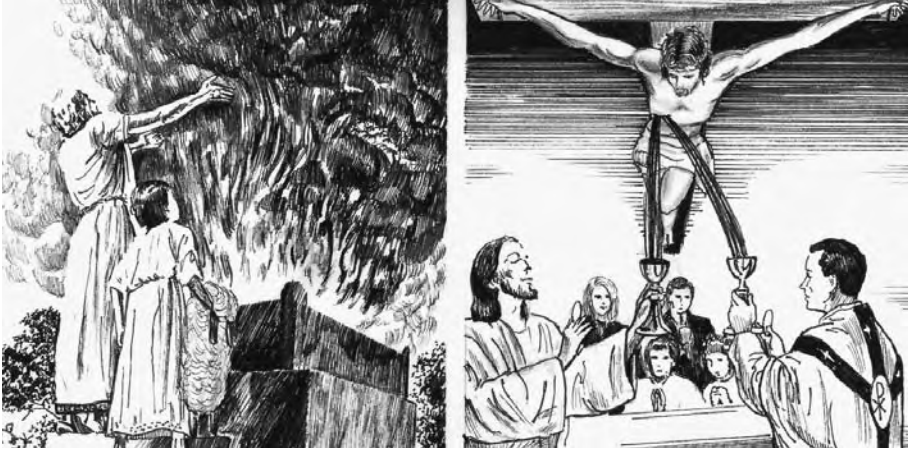
The Mass is the one sacrifice of Christ because His one sacrifice on the Cross is made present to men in every celebration of Mass.

Sacred Scripture

We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
Hebrews 10:10

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

#E4-18



Catechism of the Catholic Church

1370 To the offering of Christ are united not only the members still here on earth, but also those already *in the glory of heaven*. In communion with and commemorating the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, the Church offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. In the Eucharist the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united with the offering and intercession of Christ.

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

Ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-1563)

The bloody sacrifice which was once offered on the Cross is made present, its memory preserved to the end of the world, and its salvation-bringing power applied to the forgiveness of sins which are daily committed by us. *Session 22*

Q. 249. Who has been empowered to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice?

Only ordained priests and bishops are called to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice to the Father, with Christ, in the Holy Spirit, for the living and the dead, and for the salvation of all.

Christ commanded His Apostles to celebrate this sacrifice when He said, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). This is a sacred task: to act in the person of Christ, to be His minister, to speak words which make present the living Christ and which renew the Paschal mysteries. This can be done only by the will of Christ by those whom He has empowered to act as His ministers, calling them and sealing them in the sacrament of Holy Orders.

When, in the person of Christ, bishops and priests pronounce the words of consecration, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant is made present to the faithful in such a way that they too can participate in it.

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

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 249. Paragraphs 1142, 1555-1568.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1566 “It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the *Eucharistic assembly* of the faithful (*synaxis*) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father.”²¹ From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength.²

Vatican Council II

God, who alone is the holy one and the sanctifier, has willed to take men as allies and helpers to become humble servants in his work of sanctification. The purpose then for which priests are consecrated by God through the ministry of the bishop is that they should be made sharers in a special way in Christ's priesthood and, by carrying out sacred functions, act as his ministers who through his Spirit continually exercises his priestly function for our benefit in the liturgy... and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer Christ's sacrifice sacramentally... For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through his flesh—that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit. *Priests, 5*

#E4-30

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

1. The Mass is both a sacrifice and a sacred meal. How will you explain this to somebody who does not understand the Mass fully?
2. Each time you participate in the Mass, you share in the same self-offering of Jesus to the Father. Think of the joys, sufferings, and difficulties that you experience in the fulfillment of your daily duties which you can offer to God in union with the self-offering of Jesus in the Sacrifice of the Mass.
3. Strive to fulfill your daily duties with love and perfection and offer them to God in union with the sacrifice of Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Our Father, Your Son gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of His suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of His Body and Blood help us to experience the salvation He won for us on the Cross and the peace of His Kingdom.

He gave His Body and Blood in the Eucharist as a sign that even now we share in His life. Whatever the changes and chances of this mortal life, may we always find strength in His unchanging love, for He is the Savior of the world and the joy of all mankind.

He promised that those who feed on His Flesh and drink His Blood will have eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. May we come to possess His divine life completely in the Kingdom where He lives forever.

Father, You have brought to fulfillment the work of our redemption in the Easter mystery of Christ Your Son. May we, who faithfully proclaim His death and Resurrection in these sacramental signs, experience the constant growth of Your salvation in our lives. May our sharing at this Holy Table make us holy. By the Body and Blood of Christ, join all Your people in brotherly love. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 69

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 247. Why is the Mass both a sacrifice and a sacred meal?

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 3, 10, 11;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 11, 12;
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, 11;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 10, 47-58.*

Q. 248. Why is the Mass the one sacrifice of Christ?

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 3, 10, 11;
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;
On the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church, John Paul II, sect. 11, 12;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 9;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 10, 12, 47-58.*

Q. 249. Who has been empowered to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice?

*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17;
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. 5;
On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 2, 8-9;
Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20;
Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 14-20, 47-58.*

**Thought Provokers**

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q.247: Why did St. John the Baptist refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world? (cf. John 1:29,36 and 1 Peter 1:19.)
- Q. 248: Is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass found outside of the Catholic Church?
- Q. 249: If, God forbid, a priest should be in the state of mortal sin, could he celebrate a valid Mass?