

The Mass Catholicism's Unbloody Sacrifice

Perhaps the least understood of all of Catholicism's dogmas is the Mass. Very few Protestants even have any idea what the Mass is. In this session we will explore the RCC's dogma of transubstantiation and re-offering of the blood and body of Christ on the cross. This study will revisit some of the issues we dealt with in our foundations section, in particular the issue of context.

Doctrine of the Mass

"And inasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches that this is truly propitiatory and has this effect, that if we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid. For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits of that bloody sacrifice, it is well understood, are received most abundantly through this unbloody one, so far is the latter from derogating in any way from the former. Wherefore, according to the tradition of the Apostles, it is rightly offered not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those departed in Christ but not yet fully purified." (Council of Trent, 22nd Session)

"The priest holds the place of the Saviour Himself, when, by saying, 'Ego te absolvo' [I thee absolve], he absolves from sin... To pardon a single sin requires all the omnipotence of God... But what only God can do by His omnipotence, the priest can also do by saying 'Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis.'... But our wonder should be far greater when we find that in obedience to the words of His priests - HOC EST CORPUS MEUM [This is my body] - God Himself descends on the altar, that He comes wherever they call Him, and as often as they call Him, and places Himself in their hands, even though they should be His enemies. And after having come, He remains, entirely at their disposal; ..." Alphonsus de Liguori, "Dignity and Duties of the Priest", 1927 (bearing the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur of the Catholic Church)

"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.' 'In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.'" (Roman Catholic Catechism, § 1387, emphasis in the original)

The ceremony described above in so many words may be boiled down to this: After ceremonial procedures and prayers, the priest takes the bread (special wafers), and pronouncing the mystical phrase "HOC EST CORPUS MEUM" [This is my body], calls Jesus down from heaven into the bread. The bread (called the "host" from the Latin "*hostiam*" or "victim") is thus miraculously transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ, a process known as transubstantiation. The communicant then ceremonially eats the bread, re-offering the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The entire ceremony is known as the Eucharist.

1. Based on the material above, describe the basic function of the mass. What direct conclusions may be drawn regarding God from them?
2. To whom may the benefits of the mass be applied? What degree of benefit is claimed?
3. Is the mass literally a sacrifice (in RCC dogma)? At whose choice and command does this sacrifice take place?

4. What is the unique characteristic of this sacrifice compared to all other sacrifices?

(Canon 1) "If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are contained truly really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that He is in it only as a sign, figure or force, let him be anathema"

(Canon 2) "If anyone says that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and singular change of the whole substance of the bread and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the appearances only of bread and wine remaining, which change the Catholic Church most aptly calls transubstantiation, let him be anathema.

(Canon 3) "If anyone says that Christ received in the Eucharist is received spiritually only and not also sacramentally and really, let him be anathema." (Council of Trent, 13th Session)

5. May we properly conclude that there is no question that the RCC teaches a literal re-sacrificing of Jesus? What penalty do they declare for disbelief?

6. Read ONLY Matt 26:26-28 and John 6:54-56. What possible conclusions may be drawn regarding the prerequisites for salvation from ONLY these passages? Do they support the mass?

7. Jesus died for our sins. According to Leviticus 6:24-27a, what was to be done with the sin offering? What effect did it have on persons who touched it?

8. The story of Cain and Abel is found in Gen 4:1-13. Why was Cain's offering not accepted? (Gen 4:7)

9. What substantive differences existed between the offerings of Cain and Abel? (Gen 4:2, 7, Heb 9:22) Compare Cain's sacrifice to the mass.

In the sanctuary services, a penitent sinner brought a sacrifice to the temple. He laid his hands on the head of the animal, confessed his sins, and killed it with his own hand, transferring his guilt to the sacrifice and symbolizing the future death of the Messiah. The priest, depending on the type of the offering, would burn it on the altar, sprinkle its blood on the horns of the altar, or in front of the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place. The flesh would be eaten by the priest, transferring the guilt from the animal to the priest.

Annually, on the day of atonement, the sanctuary was cleansed. In this process, sin offerings were offered for the entire camp, and the blood was carried into the most holy place by the high priest to be sprinkled before the mercy seat (throne of God).

10. What was the proscription on the atoning sacrifice? (Lev 6:30)

11. May we regard Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as an atoning sacrifice? (Rom 5:11, Heb 9:12,23-28)

12. How many times was Jesus' sacrifice made? (Heb 7:26-27; 9:12,23-28; 10:10) How often is the "sacrifice" of the mass done? What does Hebrews say about sacrifices which must be offered again and again?

13. In John 6, Jesus explicitly says that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood. Is there any reason to think that this might not be meant literally? (John 8:12; 10:7,11; 15:1-2)

14. John 6 begins with the feeding of the 5,000. The next day, the multitude followed Jesus because they had been fed (v 26). What did Jesus tell them that they should be working to gain? (v 27) Compare with John 4:10-14, 32-24. Does this mean that Jesus did not eat?

15. After a brief exchange, the people, not understanding, ask for a sign (v 31). Jesus expands his reply. In the context of this passage, how should we understand Jesus' answer in verse 35? Do Catholics get hungry after eating the Eucharist? (John 6:32-35, Rev 2:17) Do Catholics get thirsty? (John 6:35) Do they ever die? (John 6:49-50)

16. Matthew 26:26-29 presents the last supper. How should we interpret "this is my blood" based on this passage? What conclusion should we make regarding the bread and Jesus' body? (See also Mark 14:24-25)

"The sacrifice of the Mass effects the remission of the temporal punishments for sin which still remain after the forgiveness of the guilt of sins and of the eternal punishment, not merely mediately by the conferring of the grace of penance, but also immediately, because the atonement of Jesus Christ is offered as a substitute for our works of atonement and for the sufferings of the poor souls. The measurement of the punishments of sins remitted is proportional, in the case of the living, to the degree of perfection of their disposition." (Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma)

"Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in a state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance." (Roman Catholic Catechism § 1415)

17. Since it is impossible to be in a state of grace in the RCC with outstanding penances (temporal punishments uncompleted) or unforgiven sins, how can the mass remit venial sins? Contrast this with Rom 5:8.

18. The mass is supposed to re-present the sacrifice of Christ, which pays for all our sins (Heb 9:12). How is it that the mass is unable to remit mortal sins without prior priestly absolution?

"Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration." (Roman Catholic Catechism § 1418)

"*Worship of the Eucharist.* In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession." (Roman Catholic Catechism § 1378, emphasis in the original)

"If anyone says that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of *latria*, including the external worship, and that the Sacrament, therefore is not to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations nor solemnly carried from place in processions according to the praiseworthy universal rite and custom of the holy Church; or that the Sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration, and that those who adore it are idolators: let him be anathema." (Council of Trent)

"(*Latria* is) the veneration due to God alone for his supreme excellence and to show people's complete submission to him. It is essentially adoration. As absolute *latria*, it is given only to God, as the Trinity, or one of the Divine Persons, Christ as God and as the man, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Holy Eucharist. Representations of God as images connected with the Divinity may receive

latria, which is given not to the symbol but to the Godhead, whom it signifies.” (Pocket Catholic Dictionary)

19. Since the sacrifice of Christ was a “one time only” event (Heb 9:22), what should we say about the *latria* toward the Eucharist? (Ex 20:4-5) What is the ultimate result of this practice? (Hebrews 10:28-31)

20. Notice the Council of Trent’s statement regarding idolatry. Should we accept a protestation that *latria* is not idolatry, even when made by an “infallible” RCC council? (1 Thess 5:21)

21. The RCC insists that Melchizedek celebrated the mass with Abraham. (Gen 14:17-20) How should we understand this passage? What is the “order of Melchizedek?” (Psalm 110:4, Heb 5:6,10)

22. What does Paul say about the character of the elements (bread and wine) of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 11:23-26) Are they symbolic or literal? (The word "proclaim" is the Greek "*katagello*", meaning to announce, declare, make known or proclaim.)

23. What did Jesus say the ceremony of the Lord's Supper did? (1 Cor 11:24, Luke 22:19)

24. What consideration should the participant in the Lord's Supper make toward his own personal status? (1 Cor 11:20-29) What does this mean about the ability of the ceremony to remove sin?

25. In our Christian journey, we have an ultimate objective of reaching heaven, the home of God the Father. What absolute essential must every Christian believe in order to reach heaven? (John 14:6)

26. Is the Christ that the RCC declares the Christ of the Bible?

27. What is the ultimate consequence of believing in the RCC's Christ? Is it possible to be in the remnant of Israel while believing in a false Christ?

Conclusion:

Outline the elements of Christ's true sacrifice, and compare it to the mass. Indicate whether the mass is permitted or prohibited to Christians and why. Describe the Christ of the RCC, and compare him to the true Christ.