



Unleashing the Power of the Mass

Saint Teresa, overwhelmed with God's goodness, asked the Lord "How can I thank you?" The Lord replied to her "Attend one Mass." Saint John Vianney said, "If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy. All the good works in the world placed next to one Holy Mass are as a grain of sand beside a mountain." Let's look at the Mass and have a new appreciation of its power: in unity, forgiveness, scripture, sacrifice and the Eucharist.

Unity. "You cannot pray at home as at church...exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls." (Catholic Catechism, 2179). When we join our voices in hymns and responses, we are united as the body of Christ. "We, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:17). This body of Christ includes angels and saints as well. "In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God." (Catholic Catechism, 335). During Mass, can you picture the church filled with angels, Saints and departed loved ones? All surrounding the altar in worship.

Forgiveness. Pope Francis said the Penitential Rite is very important to the Mass. We should examine our conscience as we confess out loud "to Almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned." We should repent of sins and seek intercession, asking "the Blessed Mary ever virgin, all the angels and saints and you my brothers and sisters to pray for me." The priest prays then grants absolution from Venial sins, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life". The Mass is not a substitute for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but is a reconciliation of grace so we can receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

Scripture. One Mass has more Scripture than any other form of worship. In addition to the Liturgy of the Word, the Mass itself is Scriptural. There are over 125 references to the Bible at one Mass. Scripture is quoted over 10 times in the Penitential Act, 20 times at the priest's preparation at the Altar and 30 times in the Eucharistic Prayer. Even our responses are Scriptural. "The Lord be with you" (Exodus 10:10). "And with your spirit" (2 Timothy 4:22).

Our Sacrifice. The Mass is the sacrifice by which the Church not only remembers Jesus Christ, but brings His saving Death and Resurrection into the present. We become a part of it. Jesus is present and does again what He did at the Last Supper. The priest presides, but the sacrifice is from everyone at Mass. The priest prays "that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable". We respond "May the Lord accept the sacrifice", because the sacrifice is ours too.

The Eucharist. "In this world I cannot see the Most High Son of God with my own eyes, except for His Most Holy Body and Blood." (St. Francis of Assisi). "The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life." (Catholic Catechism, 1324). The Host is Jesus. We hold Jesus in our hands. When we go home, we go home with Jesus in us.

Mass should begin the moment we enter the church. We should pray and prepare our hearts to receive Jesus. Mass should not end until we are outside the church. The priest leaves before us, to show reverence and respect for him who is "in persona Christi". Then, we "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." (Mark 16:15).

"Thanks be to God!!" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Meditation:

- How does the Mass become more special when I quietly meditate on Jesus before the opening hymn?
- How is the opening hymn similar to a stadium full of fans cheering on their team? How can I show more unity?
- In what ways is the Penitential Rite similar to the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How is it different?
- What can I do in preparation to hear the readings, get something out of the readings and respond properly?
- What is my approach to receiving Jesus in the Eucharist? Would it be different if He was physically at the altar?
- If Jesus was physically celebrating the Mass, not a priest "in persona Christi", how would I feel leaving early?