

V3_3rd_after_Pentecost= The Mass as a Sacrifice of Atonement

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U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Mass as a Sacrifice of Atonement

“This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Luke 15: 2

Woe to us if Jesus were not here to receive sinners and eat with them! But he does that daily, to the great comfort of all sinners, when he offers himself as a sacrifice of atonement in the Mass to appease the anger of his heavenly Father against the sins of the world, and gives himself to repentant sinners who return to him as the food of their souls. And this, my dear brethren, is the first advantage we derive from the wonderful and infinitely holy sacrifice of the Mass; namely:—

The holy Mass is a sacrifice of infinite atonement, which appeases the anger of God, so that he does not vent it against sinners.

Sin is so hateful to God that he would at once damn the sinner, if there were no one to appease his anger. Hence the Old Law had many sacrifices of atonement, which however, had not the power of offering adequate atonement.

The angry God, in order to be fully reconciled to us, requires a full atonement for the insult offered him by sin, a complete restitution of his injured honor; and no mere creature can give him that. If all the Angels and elect in heaven, and the holiest men on earth, countless in number, were to offer themselves to God to undergo the most cruel torments for millions of years, and to sacrifice to him their lives in the midst of such long-continued torments, nay, along with that, to burn forever in hell—all that would not have, the least effect in atoning for one mortal sin to the divine justice. For, on one side, the meaner and viler the person who offends, and the greater and higher the person who is offended, the greater also is the malice of the offence and the insult, and, of course, the greater the atonement required to wipe it out. And on the other side, the higher and greater the person to whom satisfaction is to be made, and the meaner and viler the person who has to make it, the meaner and viler, too, is the satisfaction itself. Now, since the infinite majesty of God is offended and insulted by a miserable creature, the wickedness of sin and the injury it offers to God are in a certain sense infinite, and require an infinite atonement. And since all the services that all mere creatures can offer to God are almost infinitely worthless, so the atonement rendered by such services is infinitely inadequate, and therefore it is not possible for a mere creature to satisfy God

fully for even one mortal sin and restore his injured honor. Therefore the man who undertakes to render this satisfaction must be God as well, that, as man, he may be burdened with the load of sin by which God is insulted and offended, appear before the same God, and offer his atonement; while, as he is also God, he lends to this act an infinite value and satisfying power.

This is what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has fully accomplished in taking on himself human nature “Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me. Then said I, behold, I come, that I should do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10: 5.7). What Christ thus said to his heavenly Father in the first moment of his life he afterwards fulfilled on the cross, inasmuch as he completed the sacrifice by shedding his blood and suffering a shameful death; and so he has offered to God an infinite atonement for the sins of an infinite number of creatures, if such a number were possible; he has completely restored the injured honor of God, appeased his anger, and brought about a full reconciliation between God and man.

Now that same sacrifice that was then offered in *a bloody manner* for the salvation of the world on the cross is still offered on our altars *in an unbloody manner* in the Mass. The same unspotted Lamb, Jesus Christ, now offers his sacred flesh and blood to his heavenly Father for the sins of the world, as he did then; the same death of the cross is now renewed in a mystic manner as often as the priest says Mass; and hence the same complete atonement for sin is offered to the angry God every day. Such is the express teaching of the Council of Trent: “The Council teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory” (Trid. Sess. 22: 2). For Jesus our Saviour, foresaw the many grievous sins and abominations that even Christians would commit till the end of the world, thus daily, nay, hourly, drawing down the anger of God on the world; and consequently his unheard-of love was not satisfied with merely offering himself once on the cross, but he instituted this mystery that we might offer him daily, hourly, nay, every moment almost, as an atonement to appease the anger of God. And in reality hardly a moment passes in which in some part or other of the world bread and wine are not changed into his body and blood by a priest, nay, by many priests, and thus the holy sacrifice is consummated. For the sun that in its course makes evening in one part of the world brings on the morning at the same time in another; when it is dark night here, it is daylight elsewhere; and those hours which are in the middle of our night are elsewhere the hours of noontide; so that wherever it is forenoon Mass is said, and thus at all hours and moments Mass is said, nay, many Masses, in some part or other of the globe.

In the Mass we have a most powerful means of appeasing the divine anger against sin, and averting from ourselves and those who belong to us well-merited chastisements that have been decreed against us. When the Patriarch Jacob heard that his brother Esau was coming, filled with rage, to meet him with a powerful army, he was at his wit's end to know what to do to escape the danger that threatened him and his family. At last a thought struck him: “I will appease him with the presents that go before, and afterwards I will see him; perhaps he will be gracious to me” (Gen. 32: 20). The plan succeeded to perfection; for when Esau met Jacob, and was greeted by him with a lowly obeisance, “then,” says the Scripture, “Esau ran to meet his brother and embraced him; and clasping him fast about the neck and kissing him, wept” (Gen. 32). Christians, who of us is there whose conscience does not reproach him with sin and transgressing the divine law? Ah, daily, hourly, we fall into sin only too much, and sometimes most grievously. Daily we call down on our heads the just wrath of God. Daily we deserve to suffer from his avenging justice all sorts of calamities. Let us, then, make the resolution of appeasing him with gifts, of regaining by presents the favor of the God whose wrath we have aroused. And what shall we give him? One present alone, but that the most costly and the most agreeable to him, namely, his own most beloved Son, the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, in the holy Mass.

Sinners, no matter how great and abominable your crimes, ah, let none of you despair of the mercy of God. Only come and hear Mass, and you can have the firmest hope of being reconciled with God, no matter how great his anger has been against you. If you have grievously offended God and brought down his just anger on you, so that you dare not appear before him on account of the multitude and deformity of

your sins, hear holy Mass with devotion and reverence, and imagine that you hear Jesus saying to you from the altar what he once said from the crucifix to a despairing sinner: “Take me and give me for yourself.” And not only will he be thus induced to restrain anger against you, but you will also thereby be admitted to his full favor and friendship, and he will forgive a great part of the punishment due to your past sins. For with regard to the favor and friendship of God, you must know that in the present arrangement of divine Providence you cannot receive that unless in the Sacrament of Penance, or if you have no opportunity of receiving the Sacrament, by perfect contrition for your sins; thereby man can recover immediately the sanctifying grace and the friendship of God that he had lost by mortal sin. The power of the holy Mass does not extend to restoring sinners to the grace of God in that way. And how, then? The Council of Trent tells us in the following words: “The Lord, being appeased by this oblation, forgives even enormous sins.” In what manner? “By giving the grace and, gift of penance” (Trid., Sess. 22: 2). If, then, Mass is said for a sinner, or he himself hears it with proper attention, reverence, and devotion, the good God gives him, in consideration of this infinitely valuable sacrifice of atonement, interior inspirations and illuminations by which he may see the unhappy state in which he is, the deformity and malice of his sins, and the great danger he is in of eternal damnation; and he moves his heart to resolve to free himself from that state at once by true penance. In the same way we read that many of those who witnessed the crucifixion of the Son of God were converted: “And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned, striking their breasts (Luke 23: 48). Many repented of the horrible crime they had been guilty of towards the innocent Lord, begged pardon of God, and were converted with their whole hearts; a great grace that was given them in virtue of that infinite sacrifice. That it is which should be the greatest inducement for those who are in the state of sin to hear Mass. True it is that, while they are in that unhappy state, they cannot perform a single work, no matter how holy it is in itself, not even hearing Mass, which is meritorious of eternal life; nevertheless, since they are in the greatest need of the grace of conversion, and that grace is a great one, and the holy Mass is a most powerful means of obtaining all graces, but especially that of repentance, because it is a sacrifice of atonement, and since, as I believe, many sinners will not receive this grace unless they hear Mass and thus obtain it—therefore, O sinners, do not remain away from the holy sacrifice. Nay, as long as you are in good health and have the opportunity, hear Mass, and say often with sorrow of heart, like the publican: O God, be merciful to me a sinner; O God, I implore of thee by the flesh and blood of thy Son, who is the infinite atonement and satisfaction for our sins, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!

Further, with regard to the punishment due to past sins (and this concerns just souls as well), amongst all good works, penances, and mortifications of the flesh, there is again no more powerful means of rendering ourselves partakers in the infinite satisfaction of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and of blotting out the punishment that still remains due to our sins, than the holy sacrifice of the Mass; for therein Christ himself renews his life and death, and offers them to his Father as an atonement for our sins. Hence, in my opinion, confessors can impose no better penance on their penitents, after the latter have repented and confessed, than the hearing of Mass in order to blot out the punishment still due to their sins. For the same reason there is nothing more profitable for the poor souls in purgatory than the holy Mass.

After all this, what am I to think of many Christians nowadays? I cannot understand how a man who is enlightened by the grace of faith, and who has committed many grievous sins that his conscience reproaches him with,—I cannot understand how such a man can allow a single day, much less a Sunday, to pass by without hearing Mass. Imagine that half an hour’s walk from here is living a very rich man, who is willing to bestow gratis to all who come to him great sums of money. Now, there is a man in town notoriously involved in debt head and ears, but he will not take the trouble to go to that generous man, and prefers to remain idly at home with his arms folded, standing at the door. What would you think of him? Would you not be surprised at his extreme laziness and stupidity? Would you not say that it would

serve him quite right if he and his family were to fall into the utmost poverty? Would you have any pity for him if his creditors were to throw him into the deepest dungeon, and there let him rot away? No, you think it is his own fault; he has only himself to thank for it all. Now, my dear brethren, there is perhaps no one of us, when he considers the years of his past life, who must not acknowledge that he has contracted almost infinite debts with the divine Justice on account of his sins; and at the same time we are so wretchedly poor that we have nothing in our possession by which we can reduce that debt in the least. Meanwhile there is an infinitely rich Lord, who can and will supply us with an infinitely great sum to pay off our debts, and that, too, gratuitously; that Lord is Jesus Christ in the holy Mass, and he offers us therein the infinite merits of his bitter Passion and death to present to God, and thus wipe out our debts. To share in these merits, we need not undertake a journey of even half an hour; we have the opportunity in almost every street, and at our very doors; we need only go to church and hear Mass with attention and devotion. And shall we neglect that easy and beautiful means of paying our debts to God, for the sake of fooling away our time at home, or indulging in a longer sleep, or tricking ourselves out in the fashion, or making some trifling profit in our temporal affairs, which after all we may fail to make, because we have not the blessing of God, since we neglect to hear Mass? We often try to excuse ourselves, and say that we cannot attend to prayer and the meditation of divine things, on account of our own domestic cares; we cannot give alms on account of our own poverty; we cannot fast on account of the delicate state of our health; we cannot practice bodily mortifications to atone for our sins, because our health does not permit it. Very well! I am quite willing to believe that such is the case. But is it such a difficult thing to make ourselves partakers of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ by hearing Mass, in order to pay the debts we have contracted with the divine Justice by our sins?

In future let us act more prudently, and every day, while we have health and the opportunity, hear Mass with due attention and devotion. Like poor criminals condemned to death and on our way to execution, laden with chains, let us present ourselves before the divine Majesty, and as a preparation say to God: Behold me here before thee, O God of justice, a poor sinner laden with debt, who have not a single farthing of my own to pay with; but “have patience with me, and I will pay thee all” (Matt. 18: 29); nay, I will give thee infinitely more than I owe thee. Behold, I offer thee the blood of thy dear Son! That is a treasure which is infinitely greater than all the debts that the sins of numberless worlds could contract. This payment thou *canst* not refuse; in this blood *I* sink my hitherto ungrateful, obstinate heart, as the poor widow in the Gospel cast her mite into the treasury. Thou canst take revenge on it; but I beg of thee, let it be a revenge of love and mercy. Cleanse it from all undue attachment to creatures; wound, cut, burn, and inflame it with the fire of thy divine love, that I may remain free from all sins in future, and love thee, my God, with my whole heart in time and eternity. Amen.

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