

The Eucharist

Part I

Let us listen first to the words of the Council: "At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."¹

The Mass commemorates the sacrifice of the Cross: "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come" (1 Cor II:26). But it is not simply a remembrance: "It is truly and properly the offering of a sacrifice, wherein by an unbloody immolation the divine High Priest does what he had already done on the Cross, offering himself to the eternal Father as a most acceptable victim. 'One . . . and the same is the victim, one and the same is he who now offers by the ministry of his priests and who then offered himself on the Cross; the difference is only in the manner of offering.' . . . On the Cross he offered to God the whole of himself and his sufferings, and the victim was immolated by a bloody death voluntarily accepted. But on the altar, by reason of the glorious condition of his humanity, 'death will no longer have dominion over him,' and therefore the shedding of his blood is not possible. Nevertheless the divine wisdom has devised a way in which our Redeemer's sacrifice is marvelously shown forth by external signs symbolic of death. By the 'transubstantiation' of bread into the body of Christ and of wine into his blood both his body and blood are ren-

dered really present; but the Eucharistic species under which he is present symbolize the violent separation of his body and blood, and so a commemorative showing forth of the death which took place in reality on Calvary is repeated in each Mass, because by distinct representations Christ Jesus is signified and shown forth in the state of victim."²

Christ, really present in the holy Mass, offers to the heavenly Father, under sacramental form, his immolation* on the Cross.

Jesus and all the treasures of heaven are ours on the altar. I have told you, we must make the merits of Jesus our own. Where do you find them? On the altar of the Mass where you receive not only grace, but the Author of grace. "Every time the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our Redemption is accomplished."³

The Mass is the divine act around which the life of the Church gravitates and of which she is the radiance; the center from which she receives all impulses and toward which she is continually directed; the living source from which she proceeds and the ocean to which she returns. It is the sacrifice of the Redemption, at once eternal and perpetuated in time, in heaven before God and on earth among us.

God created man by love and for his glory; he gave him intelligence that he might know him, a heart that he might love him, and a will that he might serve him. We must contemplate the infinite majesty of God who is, at the same time, our first principle and our last end; it is from him that we receive all that we have and all that we are. We must submit to him our spirit, heart, will, our entire self in adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and, because we are sinners,

The holy Mass is therefore perfect adoration, full thanksgiving, satisfaction of infinite value, all-powerful prayer.

Vocabulary:

- * Council-Vatican Council II-Meeting in Rome of all Church bishops with the Pope to renew Church teaching.
- * Immolation-sacrifice
- * Redemption-salvation
- * Assimilates-makes us one with-changes us into
- * Transubstantiation-the change of the substances of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

St. Paul sees the altar as the source of his confidence: "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession, for we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb 4:14).

Oh! let us not live like abandoned people. If you want to be confident souls, love the Mass ardently. Our Lord has compassion on our miseries, on our weaknesses. He has compassion on all our sufferings. When we are sad at having been unfaithful, he consoles us for having caused him pain. That is how far his merciful tenderness goes. Who will sound the depths of the goodness, the compassion, the condescension of our Savior for us? No, we do not have a high priest who cannot have compassion on our weakness.

"Behold your King who comes to you full of meekness" (Mt 21:5).

To unite ourselves to the Mass, to offer the Sacrifice, to consume the Victim, is to say that we would like to be victims with him. Our Communion at Mass assimilates us to the Divine Victim. Though mystical members of the immaculate Body, most Christians do not realize clearly enough that they participate in the Redemption in the measure to which they associate themselves with the divine immolation by personal immolation.

In *Mediator Dei* Pius XII said, even before the Council, "But if the oblation whereby the faithful in this Sacrifice offer the divine victim to the heavenly Father is to produce its full effect, they must do something further: they must also offer themselves as victims. . . . In this way every element in the liturgy conspires to make our souls reflect the image of the divine Redeemer through the mystery of the Cross, so that each one of us may verify the words of St. Paul: 'With Christ I hang upon the Cross; and yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ who lives in me.' We thus identify ourselves with Christ as victim for the greater glory of the Eternal Father. . . . This being so, nothing could be more right and just than that all of us, together with our divine Head who suffered for us, should immolate ourselves to the Eternal Father. . . . 'Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is given to you, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory for ever and ever.' And as the people answer 'Amen,' them not forget to offer themselves and their

anxieties, their sorrows, their troubles, their miseries and their needs, in union with their divine Head crucified."⁵

The Council tells us, "The partaking of the body and blood of Christ does nothing other than to cause us to be transformed into that which we consume."⁹

"He assumed our nature in order to communicate to us his divinity; he took a human life in order to give us a part in his divine life; he made himself man in order to make us gods. And his human birth became the means of our birth into the divine life."¹⁰

See how beautiful it is and how far it goes: he gives us the commandment: "Be you therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5:48*). But how? By eating and drinking the body and blood of him who alone is perfect as the Father and who transforms us into himself.

In the presence of this Sacrifice and around this holy table the unity of the people of God is realized, whose "spiritual center" is the Tabernacle, because it contains him who is the center of all hearts, "by whom are all things, and we by him" (*1 Cor 8:6*).

Seek to be Eucharistic souls! Hunger and thirst to eat this living miracle; nourish yourselves with it! Never omit receiving Communion through lack of love, through scruples or fear. From the moment when you are in the state of grace, go to the holy table, go to receive Jesus! An act of humility and an act of love prepare you in an instant. If you cannot go for a reason beyond your control, it is all right; Jesus will supply, seeing your ardent desire to receive him.

Here is a good thought which is not often mentioned: receive Communion not only for yourself, in order to have this immense grace, but for him, in order to respond to his desire to come down into you, to give him the joy of descending into your heart, which is a heaven for him. Perhaps you will say, "What? My poor heart, so miserable, so unworthy, a heaven for Jesus?" Yes, if you call upon him to make your heart a heaven for himself.

If you only knew how Jesus hungers for you, how he burns with desire to come into your heart, how impatient he is to come down to you, bridging all distance between you and him! The day you miss a Communion is a great disappointment for him. So go to him, respond to his desire. *Desiderio desideravi.* "I have desired with a great desire to eat this Pasch with you. I thirst, I thirst for you to come to me; I thirst to come down into you." Never deprive him of this happiness through your own fault.

The Eucharist
Questions

Part I

What did Vatican Council II teach as the reason for Jesus instituting the Eucharist?

1. To _____ throughout the centuries
2. To entrust to _____
 - a. _____ of death and resurrection
 - b. _____
 - c. _____ of unity
 - d. bond _____
 - e. _____
3. When Christ is eaten in the Eucharist, what does the Council say happens?
 - a. mind is _____
 - b. _____ is given to us.
4. What does the Mass commemorate?

5. Is the Mass simply a remembrance? _____
6. Who is the divine High Priest? _____
7. What does he do in the Eucharist and to whom does he do it?
What? _____
To whom? _____
8. The separation of the body and blood of Jesus as symbolized by their separation under the appearance of bread and wine is a "commemorative" showing forth of what? _____
9. When "the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated", what happens?

10. The Holy Mass is:

- a. perfect _____
- b. full _____
- c. satisfaction (fulfillment, paying back) of _____
- d. all _____ prayer.

Communion

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is therefore "the sacrament of love, the sign of unity, the bond of charity," and at the same time "the paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, his passion is recalled, the soul is filled with graces and the promise of future glory is given."

Let us come back to the words of Jesus himself, for no words move our hearts like his:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me: and I in him. As the living Father has sent me and I live by the Father: so he who eats me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He who eats this bread shall live for ever" (*Jn 6:51-59*).

"You fed your people with the food of angels," says Wisdom, "and gave them bread from heaven, prepared without labor; having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste" (*Wis 16:20*).

Paul VI in his admirable encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei*, after having contemplated seven modes of Jesus' presence in his Church, writes: "The mind is filled with amazement at these different ways in which Christ is present; they confront the Church with a mystery ever to be pondered. But there is yet another manner in which Christ is present in his Church, a manner which surpasses all the others; it is his presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, . . . it contains Christ himself." And further, "Not only while the sacrifice is offered and the sacrament is received, but as long as the Eucharist is kept in our churches, Christ is truly the Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us,' Day and night he is in our midst, he dwells with us, full of grace and truth."