

Liturgy talk #4:

Do we worship God the way He wants to be worshipped or the way we want to worship Him?

Growing up going to Mass every Sunday, this is not a question I ever thought about- how or even why we worship God. Mass was just something I had to do and didn't even think about what Mass was or what I was doing.

Review of previous liturgy talks- what is happening at Mass (definition) and who is doing it?

Read Ex. 3:4-10- Holy Ground- reverence, I AM wants to set us free. Holy= Set Apart

Read Ex. 3:18- purpose of Exodus was _____ through _____?

Read Ex.5:1

After the 2nd plague- Frogs everywhere in the land- (even in bed). Ex. 8:4- Pharaoh said, "Pray the Lord to remove the frogs from me and my subjects, and I will let the people go to offer sacrifice". But after Frogs disappeared, Pharaoh didn't let the people go worship.

8th Plague- locusts: Ex 10:3-4, 7-11

9th plague- darkness: Ex. 10:25-27

10th Plague- Death of First-born/Passover- Driven out not just with all Israelites and animals, but with the Egyptians' gold/silver, clothing, food.

For the Passover- Ex. 12:1-14- 14th day of Nisan- every family sacrifice 1 yr old (most meat) unblemished male lamb, blood spilled- claim who is most important, eat with unleavened bread and wine.

Ex. 12:31-33- "Pharaoh said, "Leave my people at once, you and the Israelites with you! Go and worship the Lord as you said (how God instructed). Take your flocks too, and your herds, as you demanded, and begone; and you will be doing me a favor". Took also unleavened dough, gold/silver.

Why did God want the people to worship by offering sacrifice? What did the animals represent?

Does it matter to God how the people worship(ped)- even care about the particulars? (Leviticus)- What if the people said I didn't offer a lamb or anything, or offered another animal, or not unblemished, or not 1 yr old?

What if we wanted to use crackers and grape juice? Why it need to be unleavened wheat bread, not white, rye, sour dough? Isn't it OK that we worship at home- or in a strip-mall? -Holy

ground- Does God care what I wear to Mass? What if we don't tithe? What if we don't think about what we are supposed to be offering? Does it matter how I receive Holy Communion?

Us not worshipping the way God wants us to is not benefitting us as much as He wants it to!

Today, God tells us how to worship Him through the Church- upcoming liturgy talks. (May 19)

Bishop Olmsted's recent exhortation on the Eucharist

16. Remember the First Passover was offered at the climax of the deliverance of Israel from slavery to the Egyptians (c.f. *Exodus* 12). Each household was to take a male lamb in the prime age of its life, free of defects, and sacrifice it to God. The blood of the lamb was to be spread on the entrances of their homes while its flesh was to be eaten. Every home that followed the rites commanded by God for this sacred meal were spared from the death of their firstborn sons. The first Passover saved the Israelites from death and led to their liberation from slavery. At the annual Passover, the head of the household was to recount the story of how the Lord delivered them from the oppression of Egypt and spared their lives. Then they were to eat the flesh of the lamb that they sacrificed.

17. Jesus brought this first Passover to its ultimate fulfillment at the Last Supper. At this Passover, Jesus took the position at the head of the household, the father of the family. Instead of recounting the story of the first exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, He spoke of His own suffering and death about to take place. Instead of explaining the significance of the Passover Lamb to be consumed, Jesus identified His body and blood with the bread and wine and commanded that it be consumed.

18. Just as the Hebrews had no alternative means of liberation other than the Passover lamb, there is no other means to salvation than through the grace of Jesus' own self-sacrifice. Because Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity, His offering of His Blood is in a real sense an act of God, transcending time and place. Thus, in every Mass, we feast on the flesh of the Lamb of God offered once for all in expiation for our sins.

21. When we attend Mass, do we seek to join Jesus in His total surrender to the Father's will? Do we bring our imperfections, our toil and sin, and lay them before Jesus to be consumed by His Death? We either say with Jesus, "Into Your hands, Father, I commend my spirit, too!" or we choose to remain enslaved to our sin.

30. In the Sequence "*Lauda Sion Salvatorem*" for the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, Saint Thomas Aquinas invites us **to hold back nothing** as the most appropriate response to the gift of Jesus Himself in the Eucharist. Indeed, we are to hold back nothing, but in turn, give ourselves completely to the Lord who has given Himself entirely to us in the Eucharist. The only appropriate response to this great gift is to order our whole life, first,

on receiving the gift and then imitating it, offering our own body and blood, our sweat and tears, our whole heart, all we have and are to Jesus in the service and love for our brothers and sisters as Jesus has done for us.

37. Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose to leave us His presence under the appearance of bread and wine? He reveals the reason in His discourse on the Bread of Life: *“Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me”* (Jn 6:57). He wants to be nourishment of higher order of life within us, a capacity to love and act like Him, even to *“be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Mt 5:48).

38. Bread and wine are also powerful symbols that convey eloquently Jesus’ invitation to walk the same path of sacrificial love. The grains of wheat that are used for making bread had to go through a grueling process. They are plucked, thrashed, crushed, and ground up, kneaded and shaped, and finally, they are thrown to be baked in an oven. In a similar way, the grapes are plucked and smashed. Their juice is purified and bottled. Then they are left until maturity. If we look up at the Crucified Jesus on the Cross, we can see a similar grueling process He went through in His Passion and Death; this is what true love really means. Every time we come to the Eucharist, we are invited to imitate this sacrificial love of Christ.

33. The Eucharistic presence of Jesus is not only to be with us, but also to be our strength and nourishment. Jesus does this by choosing the elements of nature – bread and wine – the food and drink that man must consume to maintain his life. The Eucharist is precisely this food and drink for they contain in themselves all the power of the Redemption wrought by Christ. The Eucharist is the only nourishment that brings us true, lasting happiness and leads us to eternal life. It is capable of transforming man’s life and open before him the way to eternal life. How is this possible?

34. While going through a period conversion, one day Saint Augustine was granted a vision in which a voice said to him: *“I am the food of the mature: grow, then, and you shall eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food; but you will be changed into me”* (Confessions, VII, 10, 18). There is a popular saying that goes, *“You are what you eat.”* How true this is when we apply this to the Eucharist. Ordinary food is absorbed by us and becomes a part of our bodies. But when we receive the Eucharist, it absorbs us; a Christian becomes truly what he eats; he is transformed into Christ. Centuries ago, Saint Leo the Great wrote: *“Our partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ tends only to make us become what we eat”*.

35. The Fathers of the Church took the example of physical food to explain this mystery. We know that the stronger form of life normally assimilates the weaker and not vice versa. The vegetative world assimilates the minerals, and the animals assimilate the vegetables, and the spiritual assimilates the material. When we receive the Body of Christ, we do not change Christ into our own substance. Instead, we are changed into Christ Himself. The normal food that we eat is not a living thing and therefore cannot give us life. It is a source of life only because it sustains the life we have. Instead, the

Bread of Life, that is Jesus, is the living Bread and those who receive it, live by it. So, while the normal food that nourishes the body is assimilated by the body and becomes a part of it, the complete opposite takes place with the Bread of Life.

36. This Eucharistic Christ gives life to those that receive Him, assimilates them and transforms them into Himself. Jesus called Himself the “Bread of Life” precisely to make us understand that He does not nourish us as ordinary food does; rather, as He possesses life, He gives it to us. Being assimilated by Jesus in Holy Communion makes us like Him in our sentiments, desires, and our way of thinking. In Holy Communion, His heart nourishes our hearts; His pure, wise and loving desires purify our selfish ones, so that we not only know what He wants, but also start wanting the same more and more. Saint Paul aptly wrote, *“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”* (Gal 2:20). Through the Eucharist, we really become not only an *Alter Christus* – Another Christ – but indeed *Ipse Christus*, Christ Himself. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in a homily on *Corpus Domini* speaks of this divine assimilation: *“The purpose of this communion, of this partaking, is the assimilation of my life with His, my transformation and conformation into He who is living Love. Therefore, this communion implies adoration; it implies the will to follow Christ, to follow the One who goes ahead of us”* (Homily, *Corpus Domini*, 2005).

Today, God tells us how to worship Him through the Church- upcoming liturgy talks.

55. The beautiful and rich Liturgy of the Church, which has been passed down to us from the first century, contains many expressions of devotion and faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. For example, we call to mind that the main reason our churches are decorated with beautiful and precious art is because here in the Church building, Jesus is present in the tabernacle, always accompanying us and interceding for us. We also celebrate our Masses with beautiful music and vestments, incense, candles, and many other details that allow us to express our faith and gratitude to Christ who has loved us so much that He has decided to stay with us, really present in the Eucharist, until the end of time. Many churches hold special hours of prayer and adoration of the Eucharist, to honor and thank our Lord, and to bring all our needs before Him. We dress respectfully for Mass knowing that we come to worship and receive our Lord who comes to us at the altar and especially in our hearts. All these expressions of devotion flow from a lively faith in Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.