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CH INSTITUTED *the Mass*





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FACE THE FACTS!

No. 11

**Christ Instituted the
Mass**

by

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FOREWORD

One of the most powerful, able and influential men in the world today. A man honored, respected and admired by all, was asked: "To what do you attribute your unparalleled success?"

He replied: "To one thing alone! I have never deceived myself! I *face the facts!*"

You have been created!

You exist!

You *live!*

Why?

What is the purpose of it all?

FACE THE FACTS!

Christ Instituted the Mass

READING TIME—20 minutes, 15 seconds

“The Mass is the only real vestige of religious faith left in the world.”

Thus Carlisle in his extreme old age, even though every trace of faith had left him.

And so must all others agree who in the light of history look down the vista of the ages at the Great Sacrifice.

For the Sacrifice of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and of Calvary, the Sacrifice of the Catacombs, and the Deserts, has been perpetuated down through all the succeeding ages of history. And it is now, what it always has been, what it always must be, the great fact in the ever varying history of mankind.

The word “Mass” is self-explanatory. It would seem to be derived from the Jewish word “Missach,” meaning a “free-offering.”

Thus it is the fulfillment of the sacrifice of the Old Law.

It is the re-presenting, to God, of the body and blood of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world—Who of-

ferred Himself a "free-offering," a sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

And it is also the means by which God would dwell among us in His Sacrament of Love.

CALVARY PERPETUATED

But the sacrifice of the Mass has still another purpose. It is to solemnly re-portray the most tragic spectacle of the ages. One might say it is a drama. The Great Action. A moving, speaking, picturization in which, as St. Paul says, "As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord until He come."

For with the offering of the sacrifice of Calvary, it was Christ's divine plan that the scene of Calvary should pass before my eyes. That His passion and death being thus recalled to me, I would remember all that He has suffered to save me. And remorse, repentance, and gratitude being reborn, I would turn again to Him. Loving Him with my whole heart, my whole soul, my whole strength, my whole mind!

All history proclaims the perpetual offering of the sacrifice of the Mass from the time of the Apostles to our own day.

Has it not been the very center in the life of the Church for nineteen hundred years? All history has been written around it!

Down through the ages, the Mass has been the keystone in the life of every Christian. Every week has the Sabbath of the New Law been sanctified in his life by attendance at Mass. At the Mass, he was married. At the Mass, he received the body and blood of Christ to strengthen him against the trials and temptations which he encountered. At the Mass his rulers were crowned. At the Mass, treaties were signed and the laws passed which were to bring the people from serfdom and feudalism into free people. With the Mass, he was buried. At the Mass, his soul was prayed for.

Thus it has been since Christ was among men. Thus it must be until Christ come again.

THE MASS BEGINS

And so the priest vested, enters into the sanctuary to begin this great drama of man's redemption. At the foot of the altar he stops. He makes the Sign of the Cross as he begins. "In the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Then, standing there, he recites the one hundred thirty-ninth Psalm. "Keep me, O Lord, from the hand of the wicked: and from unjust men deliver me."

"For Thou, O God, art my strength, etc." Now bowing deeply, he says that beautiful prayer, "The Confiteor," "I confess to Almighty God." The psalm and this prayer can be easily found in any prayer book. It is simply a personal prayer of humility by the priest, acknowledging his unworthiness and asking God's help and the prayers of the saints. The prayers said, slowly the priest ascends the steps and proceeds to the right of the altar.

And now the drama of the Mass begins. As in all dramas, the background is given to furnish the foundation for what is to follow. Standing at the left side of the altar the priest reads a prayer. Some expression of ardent longing, for the coming of the Redeemer. It is generally taken from one of the Psalms of the Old Law. Reminding us how much those who lived holy lives under the Old Law yearned and cried out to

God for the coming of the promised Redeemer. But the chosen people were not alone in this. Throughout the entire civilized world of the Latin and Greek civilization was this feeling of desire. This yearning that God would send a light into the world that men might see Him, and a way that they might go to Him. To commemorate this, the priest goes to the center of the altar to cry out in Greek, their pleas for pity. *Kyrie Eleison. Christe Eleison.* "Lord have mercy on us." "Christ have mercy on us." The cry of humanity for the coming of the Messiah! Nine times the cry is repeated in memory of the nine heavenly choirs who implored God for the Incarnation. "Lord have mercy on us."

By their prayers, and by the prayers of the patriarchs and prophets, the time of the Incarnation is hastened. "The seventy weeks are shortened," said the angel to Daniel.

THE GLORIA

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-Begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." The Redeemer comes! To signify this

glorious event the voice of the priest now rings out in the words of the angels that starlit night, announcing the Babe was born. *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* "Glory be to God on High, and on earth peace to men of good will." The chant of joy and love continues. "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee."

The *Gloria* concluded, the priest rests his hands upon the altar, bends, and kisses it respectfully. By this ceremony so simple, yet so significant, he represents the infinite love of God for man. He then turns to the people with the joyful cry, "The Lord be with you." In the name of the congregation, the Mass server answers, "And with thy spirit."

THE COLLECT

Now the priest returns to the left side of the altar once more for the Collect. Collect, which means, "gather together," so called because in it, the priest offers to God the united prayers of the faithful. Our thanks to the Incarnate Christ for coming among us. This prayer also signifies the thirty years, which Christ spent in Nazareth, dwelling among men

as He grew in grace and wisdom, and prepared Himself for His ministry. As the priest prays his arms are held in the form of a Cross, to remind us in the words with which he ends the prayers, that we can only come to God "Through Jesus Christ His only Son."

Then, too, before every prayer the priest says: *Oremus*. "Let us pray." That is, he does not pray alone. We must pray together.

THE EPISTLE

The prayers are finished. Christ's hidden life was at an end. His ministry begins. He preaches to the Jews. To signify this, under the name Epistles, the priest reads certain extracts from the Old Law, or words addressed to the Jews in the New Testament. While this is being read, the congregation remains seated, to "shew forth" the sad state of the world, which "sits in darkness and in the shadow of death," before Christ comes to bring them truth and life. It also signifies the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The time to begin His mission having come, Christ leaves Judea to go to Gali-

lee. But previous to beginning His public life, He prepares Himself to preach the Gospel by forty days of prayer and penance in the desert. How does the Church recall this to our minds?

The priest withdraws from the Epistle side of the altar, as our Lord left ungrateful Judea. Pausing in the middle of the altar to recollect himself in prayer, as Christ in the desert.

The priest prays, head bowed low.

Meanwhile, the "Missal" or the Mass-book is changed from the left to the right side of the altar. This shows, says St. Bonaventure, that "The nations figured by the right side of the altar, the Gentiles, have received the doctrine of Jesus Christ from the Jews. For the Jews with the exception of a small number have rejected the teachings of the Saviour, and driven out the Apostles. They have deserved to hear the words: 'Because you have refused the word of God we will carry it to the Gentiles.'"

THE GOSPEL

The congregation which has been sitting, now rises. It is their part in the drama. No longer is it the prophets of

the Old Testament speaking to men nor the Apostles of the New Testament, but it is Jesus Christ Himself. A hush falls over all. Christ is speaking through the lips of His emissary on earth. For extracts from the Gospel are always the words of Christ. The people stand to signify how the Gentiles accepted Christ. Together the priest and people sign themselves, three times, with the Sign of the Cross. It is to show their acceptance of the Holy Gospel. On the forehead, to show they believe it. On the lips, to show they will never deny it. On the heart, to show they love it and will follow it faithfully.

To testify fully their belief, to confess Him before men, that He may confess them before God in heaven. The "Creed" is now recited. Moving to the center of the altar standing before the tabernacle, the priest recites this profession of faith. The profession of faith that comes down from the very infancy of the Church.

THE CREDO

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth,

and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God of God: Light of Light: very God of very God: begotten not made; being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, *and was made man*. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. The third day He arose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

“And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Lifegiver, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets. And One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the Resurrection of the dead, and

the life of the world to come. Amen."

To testify their love further, when the words are recited, "And was made man," they kneel in reverence.

The drama has moved forward rapidly. Christ's ministry has been portrayed by the reading of the Gospel and the reciting of the Creed. Swiftly it comes to the climax. The passion and death of Christ.

THE OFFERTORY

Following Christ's command and example, the priest now takes bread in his hands and offers it to God. As the bread is to be changed into the body of Christ, he prays that men's hearts may be transformed into hearts of Christ. Till it be "no more we who live, but Jesus Christ Who lives in us." Now is offered to God the chalice of wine mixed with water. St. Cyprian, who lived in the second century, explains: "The wine represents Christ and the water the Christian people." Thus Christ uniting Himself to men atoned for them in His sacrifice.

In the Old Law, the priests before offering their sacrifices to God, went to the Brazen Laver of Ablution. Thus

too, the priest of the New Law, before offering up the sacrifice of the New Law goes to the side of the altar and washes his hands. This reminds men also, how Christ washed the feet of the Apostles at the Last Supper. Showing what purity of soul He required from those who would be present at the sacred banquet.

The Last Supper being finished, Christ goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, to offer Himself up to His Father. Likewise, the priest now returns to the center of the altar, and bowing low, offers up the sacrifice to the Most Holy Trinity.

The scene changes. To the Garden of Olivet. Christ prays, prostrate in His agony. In the middle of the altar the priest leans forward, his hands joined in a position of humiliation and prostration. Slowly the priest raises himself, and turns to the congregation. It is the last time he will face them until the Sacrifice is completed. He entreats them: "Brethren, pray, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." In the name of the congregation, the altar boy answers: "May the Lord receive the sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of His

name, to our benefit, and to that of all His holy Church." The congregation is reminded of Christ coming to the Apostles and finding them heavily sleeping. "What?" Christ asks, "Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye and pray. . . ." Turning back to the altar, the prayers continue in silence.

The Agony in the Garden is ended, shattered by the shouts of the rabble come there seeking Christ. To oppose their shouts of blasphemy, derision, and hate, the priest, and the altar boy, now cry out in praise and love of Christ. Sending up with that hymn of the angels before the throne of God, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

THE CANON

And now silence again. A profound silence. The angels gather round in awe and reverence. The priest prays in a low tone. All are quiet and still. For the real moment approaches when Jesus Christ becomes present in the Sacrament of the Altar.

What emotion should be awakened in men's souls as in these moments of silence are commemorated Christ scourged! Christ crowned with thorns! The heart-rending carrying of His Cross up Calvary's hill!

In the silence, the priest bends low over the altar preparing for the sacred words of consecration. The people remember Christ being stripped of His garments, thrown on the Cross, His hands and feet nailed fast.

THE CONSECRATION

Jesus speaks through the lips of the priest, "This is My body."

The priest falls on his knees in deepest reverence. Then he holds up the Sacred Host for the people to adore. Once again he kneels in reverence.

The bell rings three times. It was a custom with the Romans to sound a trumpet at the moment of the execution of one who had been condemned to death. As the priest holds up the Sacred Host, we see our Saviour raised on the Cross. Thus the bell rings.

The silence continues. The priest

takes the chalice of wine in his hands. Again Christ speaks through his lips. ". . . This is My blood . . . which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." Again does the priest fall to his knees in reverence. Then the chalice with the Sacred Blood is held up that all may adore. And again does the priest kneel in reverence. Again the bell rings.

Jesus Christ is *now* present on the altar. Body and soul, blood and divinity. His promise has been kept. ". . . Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." He has come to be near men, to help them, to hear their requests. They remember His words, "Ask, and you shall receive."

In remembering His Agony on the Cross, they instinctively remember their loved ones who have departed from this world. The priest prays for all the faithful departed that God may give them a "place of refreshment, light and peace."

Suddenly in the silence rings out the voice of the priest. *Nobis quoque peccatoribus.* "To us sinners also show mercy." With the uttering of these

words the priest strikes his breast. Why? Because it represents the repentance, the confession, and the prayer of the thief crucified on the right hand of our Lord. Thus in the name of the congregation, the priest asks for all, “. . . Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.”

The three hours of agony have passed by. To signify this, with the Host in his hands, the priest makes the Sign of the Cross three times over the chalice. Jesus is dead.

The drama goes on. The lifeless body hangs on the Cross. Standing beneath the Cross were His beloved mother, St. John, St. Mary Magdalene, and the little band of faithful disciples. What were they doing? The Gospel is silent. But if I ask my heart, and look down the vista of the years, I see them falling down upon their knees, their eyes wet with tears, praying to the Father in Heaven. What prayer did they say? What words did their lips utter? Months before His death they had asked Jesus to teach them to pray. And Jesus said to them words which the priest now cries out:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

“Our Father Who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in
Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass
against us,
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Now comes a prayer in silence. The *Libera nos*. “Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O God, from all evils past, present and to come.” This prayer said silently, reminding that Jesus immediately after His death goes to deliver the souls of the just in Limbo to lead them into Heaven, the gates of which had been opened by His atoning death.

A soldier armed with a lance approaches the body of Jesus. Pausing a moment to steady the lance he drives it straight through the heart of Jesus. To portray this the priest gently taking up the Host, reverently breaks It.

And then came the eventide. The

body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross and laid in the sepulcher. To portray this, the priest, like another Joseph of Arimathea, lays the Host in the chalice.

AGNUS DEI

“And on the third day He rose from the dead.” To signify the Resurrection of Christ, three times does the priest cry out, *Agnus Dei*. “Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world.” “Who taketh away the sins of the world” reminding men that after His Resurrection came those solemn words of Christ that gave to the Apostles the power to forgive men their sins.

Then as if this were not enough to express such joy and happiness, he echoes the words of Christ, *Pax vobiscum*. “Peace be unto you.” “And with thy spirit . . . ”

“He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.” On the altar reposes the body of Christ. In the chalice is His Most Precious Blood. With ineffable joy and happiness, the priest bends low. But first, three times, he must cry out, the Cen-

turion's words so pleasing to Jesus. *Domine non sum dignus*. "Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." Thus protesting his unworthiness to God's love, the priest reverently consumes the Eucharistic bread and wine.

And now the faithful assemble at the altar railing like the disciples at Emmaus to participate in this divine banquet. The Confiteor is recited through which men protest repeatedly their unworthiness of God's infinite love and goodness. Then the priest administers to them, one by one, their heart's desire, a particle of this "living bread which came down from Heaven."

For forty days after the Resurrection Christ dwelt among His own. To commemorate this the priest returning to the right of the altar recites the prayer known as the "Postcommunion." A prayer of joy and thanksgiving.

"He ascended into Heaven." The priest goes back to the middle of the altar, portraying the passage of our Lord to the Mount of Olives. Turning

to the congregation again he wishes them peace. "The Lord be with you.

Again he kisses the altar to signify men's everlasting love for God, and God's eternal love for men. Then turning to the people, he blesses them.

Once more the priest goes to the left side of the altar. This is to read the Holy Gospel according to St. John. It is the end of the Mass! The drama ends! Once again we have shown forth the death of the Lord. For the reading of this Gospel portrays the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, going forth to "Teach all nations."

Again we make the Sign of the Cross, on our forehead, on our lips, on our hearts, recalling Christ's own words to the Apostles, "He that heareth you, heareth Me. . . ."

Then, in joy and thankfulness, standing before the tabernacle, looking up to Heaven, in his own name, in the name of the Church, in the name of all the faithful, the priest cries out to God, *Deo Gratias*. "Thanks be to God."

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