

"I am He who has invited you.

"I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting in you; come and receive me.

"You come so that you may be sanctified by me and united to me; so that you may receive new grace and be inflamed anew to amendment.

"Neglect not this grace, but prepare your heart with all diligence, and bring your beloved into your heart."

PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

O Almighty, everlasting God, behold I draw near to the Sacrament of Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I draw near, as a sick man to the Physician of life, as one defiled to the Fountain of mercy, as one blind to the Light of the eternal splendor, as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Wherefore, I implore the fullness of Thy infinite bounty that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to heal all my sickness, to wash away my defilement, to give light to my blindness, to enrich my poverty and clothe my nakedness, so that I may receive the Bread of Angels, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with such contrition and devotion, such purity and faith, such purpose and intention, as may avail to the welfare and salvation of my soul.

Grant me, I beseech Thee, to receive not only the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of my Lord, but also the very reality and efficacy of the Sacrament. O most gracious God, grant me so to receive the Body of Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that very Body which He took of the Virgin Mary, that I may be truly incorporated into His Mystical Body, and so numbered amongst its members.

O most loving Father, grant me at last to behold with open face, and forevermore, Thy beloved Son, whom I purpose to receive now in my pilgrimage, beneath the veils of this Sacrament; who lives and reigns, God through everlasting ages. Amen.

**The Eucharistic
Miracle of
Lanciano, Italy,
which occurred in
700 A.D.
and still exists
in St. Francis of
Assisi Church
Lanciano, Italy**



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The Eucharist



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By Bishop Fulton J. Sheen Concerning The Traditional Latin Mass and The Eucharist

The most beautiful thing about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ was His death. Everyone else came into the world to live; He came into it to die; "to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28)

His death was the one thing He wished to have remembered. He did not ask that men should write down His words in books. He did not ask that His deeds be recorded in history. But He did ask that men remember His death.

And in order that its memory might not be any haphazard narrative on the part of men, He Himself instituted the precise way it should be recalled. The memorial was instituted the night before He died, at what has since been called "The Last Supper." Taking bread into His hands, He said: "This is my Body, which shall be delivered for you," that is, delivered unto death. Then over the chalice of wine, He said, "This is my Blood of the new covenant, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."

Thus, in an unbloody symbol of the parting of the Blood from the Body, by the separate consecration of bread and wine, Christ pledged Himself to death in the sight of God and men, and represented His death, which was to come the next afternoon at three o'clock. He was offering Himself as a Victim to be immolated, so that men might never forget that "greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." In order that this sacrifice would never be forgotten, He gave the divine command to the Church: "Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

The Mass is the perpetuation of the Sacrifice of Calvary with the same Priest and the same Victim. The difference is that Calvary was a bloody sacrifice; the Mass is offered in an un-bloody manner. Furthermore, on the Cross our Lord was alone; in the Mass we are with Him. We offer ourselves in the Mass with Christ through bread and wine. In the early Church we would have brought these elements. Today we bring that which buys bread and wine. Hence, the Offertory collection.

We bring bread and wine because of all things in nature these two best represent the substance of life. Wheat is, as it were, the very marrow of the ground, and the grapes are its very blood; both give us the body and blood of life. In bringing these two things, which give us life and nourish us, we are equivalently bringing ourselves to the Sacrifice of the Mass.

We are therefore present at each and every Mass under the appearance of bread and wine, which stand as symbols of our body and blood. We are not passive spectators, as we might be while watching a spectacle in a theater, but we are co-offering our Mass with Christ. We are on the altar symbolically under the appearance of bread and wine. But bread comes from wheat and wine from grapes, and neither become

The plant life is the food of the animal that does not dwell in some distant planet, and neither does Christ, who is the Food of the soul, dwell apart from us like an absentee landlord. He is with us, He is here, He has a dwelling.

The tabernacle is now de facto the localization of life, and it is there and there only that the downcast eyes of sin find wealth of purging tears; only there, that the longings of hope are uplifted to look beyond the veil; only there, that the scourged heart that bleeds, and bleeds afresh, at last breaks its silence in answer to the invitation: "Child give me thy heart."

You would never pass by a friend without greeting him. Never pass by our Lord in the Eucharist without a prayer. You and I have an opportunity to know the Judge before the day of our trial, and that friendship may avail us much in the hour of Judgment.

MEDITATION BEFORE COMMUNION - FROM THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

"I am the Lover of purity, and the Giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

"Make ready for me a 'large upper room finished and ready; there prepare for us' (Mark 14:15). If you will have me come to you, and remain with you, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of your heart.

"Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices; sit like a sparrow solitary on the housetop, and think of your excesses in the bitterness of your soul. For every lover prepares the best and fairest room for his dearly beloved; and hereby is known the affection of him that entertains his beloved.

"Know, nonetheless, that you cannot prepare yourself by the merit of any action of yours, although you should prepare yourself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

"But it is out of my mere goodness and grace that you are suffered to come to my table; as if a beggar were invited to dinner by a rich man and had nothing else to return him for his benefits but to humble himself and give him thanks.

"Do what lies within you, and do it diligently; not out of custom, nor for necessity, but with fear, and reverence, and affection, receive the Body of thy beloved Lord your God, who vouchsafes to come to you.

The priest must stay at the altar until the Mass is finished. He may not come down. So we must stay with the Cross until our lives are finished. Christ on the Cross is the pattern and model of a finished life. Our human nature is the raw material; our will is the chisel; God's grace is the energy and the inspiration.

Touching the chisel to our unfinished nature, we first cut off huge chunks of selfishness; then by more delicate chiseling, we dig away smaller bits of egotism until finally only a brush of the hand is needed to bring out the completed masterpiece; a finished man made to the image and likeness of the pattern on the Cross.

We are at the altar under the symbol of bread and wine; we have offered ourselves to our Lord; He has consecrated us. We must therefore not take ourselves back, but remain there unto the end, praying unceasingly, that when the lease of our life has ended and we look back upon our life lived in intimacy with the Cross, the echo of the Sixth Word may ring out on our lips: "It is finished." (John 19:30)

And as the sweet accents of "Go, the Mass is ended" reach beyond the corridors of time and pierce the "hid battlements of eternity," the Angel choirs and the white robe army of the Church Triumphant answer: "Thanks be to God."

We believe that Jesus Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, on our altars: under the appearance of Bread. How do we know it? Our Lord told us "This is my Body."

No one ever doubted these words of our Lord until the year 1088, and then it was later retracted. The next denial came four centuries later. It is therefore relatively late in Christian history that mankind has been bold enough to say that our Lord did not mean what He said about the Eucharist, or Hell, or divorce.

If Christianity just meant a memory of Christ, how unsatisfying it would be! If Christ means no more to our lives than the example of His life twenty centuries ago, then it is difficult to see how He was God, and how He differed from man. If He had not power to extend His life, His influence, His grace, His very Body and Blood through time to its very end, then He is under the same limitations of every man.

Life demands more than a souvenir to sustain it, and if Christ is the very life of Christians, then He must be more than a memory. It would not be enough to tell the animal: "See the way the plant lives; let that be your example." If Christ is to be our Food and our Life, it is fitting that He be with us, for it is of the nature of life to be localized and definite.

what they are, except by passing through, in one instance a mill, and in the other a wine press. Hence both are symbols of Christians who are called to suffer with Christ, so that they may reign with Christ.

As the moment of Consecration arrives, the priest, in obedience to the words of our Lord, "Do this for a commemoration of me," takes bread in his hands and says: "This is the chalice of my Blood of the new and eternal testament." He does not consecrate the bread and wine together, but separately. The separate consecration of the bread and wine is a symbolic representation of the separation of body and blood, and since the Crucifixion entailed that very mystery, Calvary is thus renewed on our altar. But Christ, as has already been said in part 1, is not alone on our altar; we are with Him. Hence, the words of consecration have a double sense; their primary signification is: "This is the Body of Christ; this is the Blood of Christ;" but their secondary signification is: "This is my body; this is my blood."

Some such sentiment as the following we should have in our hearts at the moment of consecration:

"I give myself to God. Here is my body. Take it. Here is my blood, take it. Here is my soul, my will, my energy, my strength, my property, my wealth – all that I have. It is Thine. Take it! Consecrate it! Offer it!

"Offer it with Thyself to the heavenly Father in order that He, looking down on this great sacrifice, may see only Thee, His Beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased.

"Transmute the poor bread of my life into Thy divine life; thrill the wine of my wasted life into Thy divine Spirit; unite my broken heart with Thy Heart; change my cross into a crucifix. Let not my abandonment and my sorrow and my bereavement go to waste.

"Gather up the fragments, and as the drop of water is absorbed in the wine, let my little cross be entwined with Thy great Cross so that I may purchase the joys of everlasting happiness in union with Thee.

"Consecrate these trials of my life, which would go unrewarded unless united with Thee; 'transubstantiate' me so that like bread that is now Thy Body, and wine that is now Thy Blood, I, too, may be wholly Thine.

"I care not if the species remain, or that, like the bread and the wine, I seem to all earthly eyes the same as before.

"My station in life, my routine duties, my work, my family – all of these are but the species of my life, which may remain unchanged; but the substance

of my life, my soul, my mind, my will, my heart 'transubstantiate,' transform them wholly into Thy service, so that through me, all may know how sweet is the love of Christ. Amen."

In the Offertory, we offered ourselves to God through Christ. In the Consecration, God accepted our offering in Christ and He changes us into Christ. Now in the Communion, Christ gives Himself back to me.

All life is sustained by communion with a higher life. If the plants could speak, they would say to the moisture and the sunlight: "Unless you enter into communion with me, become possessed by my higher laws, and powers, you shall not have life in you." If animals could speak, they would say to plants: "Unless you enter into communion with me, you shall not have my higher life in you." We say to all lower creation: "Unless you enter into communion with me, you shall not share in my human life."

Why, then, should not our Lord say to us: "Unless you enter into communion with me, you shall not have life in you?" The lower is transformed into the higher: plants into animals, animals into man, and man, in a more exalted way, becomes "divinized," if I may use that expression, through and through by the life of Christ.

Communion is, first of all, the receiving of Divine Life, to which we are no more entitled than marble is entitled to blooming. It is a pure gift of an all merciful God who so loved us that He willed to be united with us, not in the bonds of flesh, but in the ineffable bonds of the Spirit, where love knows no satiety, but only rapture and joy.

But there is another aspect of Communion of which we but rarely think. Communion implies not only receiving Divine Life; it also means God giving human life. All love is reciprocal. There is no one-sided love, for love by its nature demands mutuality. God thirsts for us, but that means that man must also thirst for God. But do we ever think of Christ receiving communion from us?

The supernatural life has two sides; the building up of the Christ pattern and the tearing down of the old dam. Communion therefore implies not only a "receiving," but also a "giving." There can be no ascent to a higher life without death to a lower one. Does not Easter Sunday presuppose Good Friday? Does not all love imply mutual self giving which ends in self recovery? This being the case, should not Communion be an exchange, instead of a place of exclusive receiving?

Is Life to pass from Christ to us and nothing to go back in return? Are we to drain the chalice and give nothing to its filling? Are we to receive bread but give no wheat to be ground, wine and give no grapes to be crushed?

If all we did during our lives was to go to Communion to receive Divine Life, and taking it away, leave nothing behind, we would be parasites on the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Pauline injunction bids us to fill up in our body the sufferings wanting to the Passion of Christ. We must therefore bring a spirit of sacrifice to the Eucharistic table; we must bring the mortification of our lower self, the crosses patiently borne, the crucifixion of our egotism, the death of our concupiscence, and even the very difficulty of our coming to Communion.

Only then does Communion become what it was always intended to be – namely, a commerce between Christ and the soul, in which we not only receive His Life, but also announce His death. We give Him our time; He gives us His eternity. We give Him our humanity; He gives us His divinity. We give Him our nothingness; He gives us His all.

Do we fully realize how much Communion is bound up with sacrifice, both on the part of our Lord and on the part of us, His poor, weak creatures? The Mass makes the two inseparable: there is no Communion without a Consecration. There is no receiving the bread and wine we offer, until they have been transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ. Communion is the consequence of Calvary – namely, we live by what we slay.

All nature witnesses this truth; our bodies live by the slaying of the beast of the fields and the plants of the gardens. We draw life from their crucifixion. We slay them not to destroy, but to fulfill; we immolate them for the sake of communion.

And now by a beautiful paradox of Divine Love, God makes His Cross the very means of our salvation. We have slain Him! We nailed Him there! We crucified Him! But Love in His eternal Heart willed not to be defeated.

He willed to give us the very life we slew; to give us the very Food we destroyed; to nourish us with the very Bread we buried, and the very Blood we poured forth.

He made our very crime a happy fault; He turned a Crucifixion into a Redemption; a Consecration into a Communion; a death into life everlasting.

We are all co-offerers with Christ through the priest. The Mass, therefore, is no stage drama with the priest on the altar and we the spectators. What was done on Calvary avails us nought, unless we repeat it in our lives.