



Allocutio



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Allocutio: The Sacrifice of the Mass

The Council of Trent (Session 22, 17 September 1562) does not go much into the meaning of the Mass but presumes a lot. It summarises everything by saying that because he wanted to leave his Church a visible sacrifice such as the nature of man requires so that the bloody sacrifice once to be accomplished on the Cross might be represented, so that the memory of it remain to the end of the world he offered up to the Father his body and blood under the form of bread and wine and commanded the apostles to do the same.

This was taken up by Pope Pius XII in his top class Encyclical “Mediator Dei” in 1947. “The august Sacrifice of the altar is therefore no mere commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ; it is truly and properly the offering of a sacrifice, wherein by an unbloody immolation the High Priest does what he had already done on the Cross, offering himself to the Eternal Father as a most acceptable victim.”

But the manner in which Christ is offered is different. On the Altar, by reason of the glorious condition of his humanity ‘death will no longer have dominion over him’ the shedding of his blood is no longer possible. By transubstantiation the bread and wine become his body and blood. But the two separated species under which he is present symbolise the violent separation of his body and blood. The separation of his body and blood show forth his death, he is shown forth as victim. Calvary is made real at each Mass. “It must be emphasised again and again that the Eucharistic Sacrifice is essentially the unbloody immolation of the divine Victim, an immolation mystically manifested in the separation of the sacred species and the offering made of them to the eternal Father”.

It is vital for us all to come into touch with this sacrifice so that we can benefit from its merits. The Pope says, “We might say that on Calvary Christ has provided a bath of expiation and salvation, filled with the blood he has shed for us; but unless men plunge into it and there wash away the stains of their sins, they cannot be cleansed and saved.” In fact the Mass is the greatest means to help us benefit from the redemption Christ has won for us.

But the Mass is not just passive. It is where we must enter ourselves into what Christ is doing. We should all try and have the same sentiments that Christ had when he was offering himself in sacrifice. Like humility, praise, thanksgiving. But we must also become victims like Christ. “With Christ I hang upon the Cross.”

And that is why St. Paul said to the Romans: “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice”. And not just our bodies but our whole being. In a wonderful passage Pope Pius gives us examples of what he means. “On this altar let innocence be cultivated, pride sacrificed, anger immolated, all lust and evil be done to death, let the gift of chastity, not turtle doves, be your offering. And let innocence, not young pigeons be your sacrifice. As



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we stand at the altar then we must change our hearts; uproot the sin in them, and carefully tend and foster in them everything that, through Christ, may avail for supernatural life. So together with the immaculate victim we shall become an oblation pleasing to the eternal father.” As the people answer Amen let them not forget to offer themselves and their anxieties, their sorrows, their troubles, their miseries and their needs, in union with the divine head crucified.

The greatest examples of how we should be at Mass is not unlike the example of Mary and John at Calvary. They united their sufferings with Christ. We must offer everything with Christ at mass. When the priest raises the host saying “This is my body given up for you”, we can join with Christ in making that too our disposition to the heavenly father: here is my body and its energies handed over to you, God our Father, for what you want. Here is my body and its energies given so that I can serve my wife, husband, children, neighbour, Church, praesidium, etc. Here I am Lord I come to do your will with this body and its energies.

The priest says, “This is the cup of my blood which will be poured out so that sins may be forgiven.” And so I offer up all the sins committed against me and forgive them with Christ. Whether it is an insult, a wrong judgement, a pricking of my pride, a slight brush, let it go with Christ on his Cross. I know that this is not easy.

When we go to Mass we go to worship, to acknowledge God. Of course you can do that too in prayer or in other kinds of services. But mass is about offering yourself to God with Christ and offering yourself to be like him in loving God and others following the way of Jesus. And we offer ourselves being led and united to His great act of worship on the Cross.

The Mass is about wanting to become like him in his heroic offering. It is saying, “I don’t just want any half-hearted commitment. I admire and love Jesus and wish to emulate his love. And I come to Mass to have my love energies strengthened. Because I know I am weak and that without him I can do nothing.”

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill