

What We Believe... Why We Believe It

By
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The Every Catholic Guy

The True Origins of the Mass—Part I

We normally think of apologetics as arguments that we make in defense of our faith to non-Catholics. But I frequently find myself having to defend certain aspects of Catholicism to my fellow Catholics. The thing I defend most is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is because many Catholics demonstrate no respect for the Mass, or for the Holy Eucharist. If I bring an inquirer or catechumen to Mass and Catholics are treating It disrespectfully, this only demonstrates to my guest that the Mass is not important.

So this is another type of explanation of the Mass, one I mostly use for Catholics. It is just as important to explain the Mass to Catholics as it is non-Catholics. So while this is not a typical explanation of the Mass, it is a very necessary one nonetheless. The idea here is to demonstrate the authority of the Church and the origin of the Mass from under the Old Covenant. Much of what I cover here should be familiar to all Catholics, but sadly it is not very a common Catholic who knows or understands what you are about to see. I think you'll understand what I'm talking about as we go along. So let's get started...

Even before God created the world, He knew He would create man. Because He is infinite love, God's creation of man was an extension of that love. But after the fall, man became evil. Indeed, once our first parents yielded to temptation, the journey from innocent liberty to evil license accelerated at an alarming rate. God didn't leave us orphaned, though. When man fell, He promised us a Redeemer to redeem us from sin.

In the meantime, the world became rife with evil, with man giving himself over to every sort of degradation and perversion he could conceive. In fact, man had so declined into the depths of abasement that everyone had forsaken and forgotten God—that is, all but one man who still found favor with Him. That man was Noah.

God told Noah he would destroy mankind and everything inhabiting the world, but He promised Noah that he, his family, and every species of animal would be saved. So Noah built an ark according to God's instructions, and loaded two of every species of animal onto the ark. Then, according to God's promise, the floods came and all of mankind was destroyed.

When the flood waters receded and Noah and his family were able to again walk on dry ground, Noah built an altar to God and made sacrifices to Him. God was pleased with these sacrifices and promised Noah that he would never again destroy mankind with a flood. As a sign of this covenant, God established the rainbow in the clouds. So man repopulated the earth.

And so it was until we get to the Patriarchy of Abraham. Abraham was a friend of God—a just and upright man. He served God well, and God promised Abraham that he would be the father

of a great nation, with his descendants more numerous than the stars. So the nation of Israel was born of Abraham, and it grew.

The children of Israel had settled among the Egyptians. They had grown so large in numbers that the Egyptians feared they would become a threat, so they enslaved the Israelites, working them to build great structures and treating them cruelly. But God sent Moses to set His people free. He led them from bondage so they could settle in the promised land to become a great nation and worship God as He commanded.

After Moses led the children of Israel from bondage, God led them to Mount Sinai in Egypt. Then God said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." So Moses went to God as He had been instructed. It was there that God gave Moses the ten commandments. But along with the moral code that we all have to live by, He also commanded Moses to build the Ark of the Covenant, a lamp stand, their place of worship and its surroundings, and even exactly how He wanted the inside of the place of worship to be set up.

Then God told Moses to establish the levitical priesthood. These men were to be set apart for God, so He told Moses, how He wanted them to be consecrated, or ordained, to Him. Once God had set apart the levitical priesthood to worship and make sacrifices to Him on behalf of the people, God instructed Moses exactly how the priests were to be dressed to make themselves worthy to stand in His presence at the Arc of the Covenant. It was then that God told them exactly how he wanted to be worshipped in word and deed. He demanded offerings of bread and grain, of wine, and of flesh to be made daily as worship of Him. God demanded absolute obedience to these sacrifices and everything connected with them for His worship!

"And if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth." (Deuteronomy 28:1) "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you." (Deuteronomy 28:15) So God was and is serious about how He is to be worshipped, and there are grave consequences for disobedience.

But what happened to the Old Covenant when Jesus established the New Covenant? Well, it was at the Last Supper that Jesus established the New Covenant with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But how did that effect the Old Covenant and how God was to be worshipped? That is what we will examine in the second part of "The True Origins of the Mass" next week. Until then, this is What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

In the meantime, if you have any Catholic questions, visit JoeSixpackAnswers.com to get your answers. You'll even have the opportunity there to sign up for a free email course to learn things about the Catholic Church you never knew. The free email course will show up in your inbox every three days. By signing up for the course, you'll also get regular invitations to register for free webinars I host. Can't attend the live event? Register anyway, because registrants will get a link to the recorded webinar the next day. It's all free! There's never a charge for learning things from Joe Sixpack.