

*What We Believe... Why We Believe It*

By  
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## The True Origins of the Mass—Part II

In last week's installment, we looked at how God demanded to be worshipped in the Old Covenant. We looked at how He established the levitical priesthood, told the priests how they were to dress, how He wanted the liturgy performed, and the establishment of the Ark of the Covenant. He also demanded obedience to everything He commanded concerning His worship, or the people would face severe consequences. All of this was a prefigurement of what we have in the New Covenant priesthood and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

But what happened to the Old Covenant when Jesus established the New Covenant? How did that effect the Old Covenant and how God was to be worshipped under the New? Jesus said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). But how did He do that?

First, Jesus did something very profound. He said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18). Then after His resurrection from the dead, He told the apostles, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). Thus He passed on to them His own mission. And repeatedly He told His apostles, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16, et al.). So Christ has given His divine authority to Peter and all his successors.

Since Jesus gave us the new, ultimate sacrifice for divine worship at the first Mass when He said, "Do this in memory of me", and since He gave His divine authority to Peter and his successors, the Church speaks in Christ's name and determines how the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is to be done.

Since Jesus gave His apostles His divine authority, and since the New Covenant is merely a fulfillment of the old (not a replacement), the Church speaks in Jesus' name to regulate the Mass. Just as God told Moses how He wanted His priests to dress, so too does the Church tell New Covenant priests how to dress. The levitical priests had to dress worthily to stand in God's presence in the Ark of the Covenant. Likewise, Catholic priests have to dress worthily to re-present Jesus' sacrifice to the Father while before the Tabernacle. And under the new covenant, the sacrifices of bread, wine and flesh were perfected with the Holy Eucharist, which is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Now let's recap. God told His people how He wanted to be worshipped under the old Covenant; He sent His Son into the world with the mission & authority to redeem man and apply that redemption; Jesus passed on to the apostles His own mission and authority; it is now the Catholic Church who speaks on God's behalf; so now we **must** worship as the rubrics command in order to be in obedience to God!

How well do we obey God and His Church at Mass? Let's look at something from the GIRM, or General Instruction of the Roman Missal. "Attention must therefore be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and by the traditional practice of the Roman Rite and to what serves the common spir-

itual good of the People of God rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice. A common bodily posture, to be observed by all those taking part, is a sign of unity” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Chapter 2, ¶ 42). In other words, nothing has changed one iota from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. We must still do exactly as the Church commands at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

For example, proper posture during Mass is to join your hands at your breast in an attitude of prayer while standing. You can also clasp your hands at the chest or top of the abdomen. Your hands don’t go in your pockets or on the back of the pew.

During the Our Father, we often see people pray with their hands extended and palms facing upward. This is definitely forbidden. This posture is reserved strictly to the priest. It represents the prayers of the people going through the priest upward to God in heaven. We may never do this. Handholding is also nowhere mentioned in the GIRM.

And if in your church everybody there wanders around at the Sign of Peace to shake hands, kiss someone, or try to greet all the people they can is violation of what the Church commands, and therefore in violation of what God commands. As you’ll recall, the GIRM says, “Attention must therefore be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and by the traditional practice of the Roman rite and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, *rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice*. A common bodily posture, to be observed by all those taking part, is a sign of unity.” In other words, the proper thing to do is to turn to the person on your right and the person on your left and embrace hands while softly saying, “Peace be with you.”

How do you dress for Mass? From what I see, especially in the summertime, many Catholics wouldn’t be allowed to even enter St. Peter’s Basilica. The dress code is strictly enforced at St Peter's Basilica. Men must wear long trousers (no shorts) and cover their shoulders and chest, and women must not have either bare shoulders or skirts shorter than knee length. I always ask people dressed inappropriately for Mass if that is the way they would dress for a private audience with the Pope. They tell me, often indignantly, that they would dress much better for a private audience with the Pope. I asked them why. I ask them why they would dress better for the pope than they do for the pope’s only Boss. Not only does this make a point, but it also allows me to determine whether or not they believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The feedback I get from them is usually quite revealing.

Now you may be wondering why I brought all of this up. One reason was so you could do a little self-examination. Another reason is because most of you, if not all of you, have never heard the relationship between the Old Covenant to the New. I think it is important that all of you know this information.

The apologetical reason is because, as Catholics, we all have an obligation to inform our Mass attending brothers and sisters of the things I covered herein. Restoring dignity and respect to the Mass is a responsibility we all have. If you will make up your mind to share this information with just one family at Holy Mass each week, the message will grow exponentially. This is What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

If you have any Catholic questions, visit [JoeSixpackAnswers.com](http://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.