

## Pastor's Message

In my first message on the Mass I spoke of the need for *full, conscious, active participation* of us all at our celebration of the Eucharist. The second message reminded us that we all celebrate the Mass, not just the priest and the ministers. In this third message I want to talk about what exactly it is that we celebrate at Mass? Is it a sacrifice or is it a meal?

As with all things Roman Catholic, the Mass is both a holy sacrifice **and** a meal. The Eucharist is the first of all our sacraments. At Mass, we enter into that one, holy and unrepeatable offering of God's only Son for the reconciliation of us all and of the whole world to God. In the ancient world people offered sacrifices to the gods to appease them, to ask for rain and good harvests, to ask for blessings and healthy children. The Jewish people offered sacrifices in the temple to God as a sign of worship and thanksgiving for the many ways God had blessed them and to ask God for continued blessings and forgiveness for the times they had broken God's holy covenant with them. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem was the most sacred site for all the Jews including Jesus who went to the Temple throughout his life to offer sacrifices and to pray.

The great scandal of the cross, that the Son of God was crucified, could only be understood by the early followers of Christ, once they began to see this act as a sacrifice by the Son of God to God, the Father for us all. The letter to the Hebrews and many of Paul's early letters struggle to explain why Jesus had to die on the cross. Jesus dies for our sins, so that we might live for eternity, so that we could all be once again reconciled to God. The Mass allows us to enter into that sacrifice of Jesus on that hill of Calvary. By so doing we too are once again saved, redeemed, given life eternal.

And the Mass is a meal. It is what Jesus did on Holy Thursday as the disciples gathered around the table with him. Jesus broke the bread and said: *Take, eat, this is my Body.* Then he took a cup and said: *Take, drink, this is the cup of my Blood to be poured out for you.* Our Mass is that meal. We are invited to gather around the table with the Lord who once again breaks bread and shares a chalice and calls us into the mystery of his dying and his rising.

Our Mass is our participation in an unbloodied sacrifice which we do in memory of that bloody sacrifice offered for us on Calvary. Our Mass is our gathering around a table to celebrate a meal with our Lord. Our Mass is a mystery that invites us into the fullness of life and sacrifice that leads to eternal life. It is the mystery of our faith that we proclaim at Mass: *When we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again.*

Fr. Chris