



# English Martyrs Catholic Church

2 Mitcham Lane, London SW16 6NN (Fr Gregory Verissimo PP)



## Confirmation programme 2018: *The Meaning of the Mass*

*“If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy.” St. John Vianney*

Question	Answer	Reflection
<p><b>What is the Mass?</b></p>	<p>In simple terms, it is the continuation, through space and time, of the sacrifice of God the Son on Calvary.</p>	<p><i>Very simply, what the Mass is, is reaching to Calvary and laying hold with your hands of the Cross of Christ, with Christ on it, and you plant it down here, today, whenever Mass is celebrated. We take the Cross and we plant it down in Nairobi, we plant it down in Tokyo, we plant it in New York, we plant it in this city. That’s what the Mass is: the continuation of Calvary.</i> Ven. Fulton Sheen</p>
<p><b>Why did Our Blessed Lord choose to sacrifice Himself?</b></p>	<p>By sin we offend the Infinite God. We incur an infinite debt. But we are finite creatures...we cannot pay the debt ourselves. So God pays the debt for us...</p>	<p><i>‘A debt to Divine justice has been incurred; and that debt must needs be paid. But man could not make this satisfaction for himself; the debt is something far greater than he can pay;... The only way in which the satisfaction could be made, and men could be set free from sin, was by the coming of a Redeemer who is both God and man. His death makes full satisfaction to the Divine Justice, for it is something greater than all the sins of all mankind’</i> The Catholic Encyclopaedia</p>
<p><b>How do I take part?</b></p>	<p>Each person who comes to Mass can take part in, can share, in the great Sacrifice of Our Blessed Lord by going up onto the altar with Him and dying with Him? Through Baptism we become part of the Mystical Body.</p>	<p><i>‘And in order to take part in it, you have to bring little crosses. Our Blessed Lord said, ‘Take up your cross daily and follow me’. Everyone has a cross. For example, you young students, you’ve got the cross of spelling and mathematics and of obedience when mother says, ‘Do the dishes’. That’s a little cross. And older people have different kinds of crosses. And we bring all our little crosses here and we plant down beside that great cross of Christ. And we mass them all together... under Him. That is the Mass.’</i> The Venerable Fulton Sheen</p>
<p><b>How do I put myself on the altar?</b></p>	<p>When the bread and wine are brought up to the altar in the Offertory, I send myself up with them. I offer myself with the offering of these things that give us life and joy.</p>	<p><i>Christ’s sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.</i></p>

**Why bread and wine?**

These represent the whole of creation. Wheat and grapes need the Earth, the Sun and all the elements to be brought into existence. Then the work of human hands is applied. The whole of nature including our humanity comes from God and we now offer it back and we say... "All of this is Yours". At the same time we say "All of me is Yours". Isn't that what all lovers say?

*Bread and wine... continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine,<sup>154</sup> fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine" – gifts of the Creator. CCC 1333*

**How does the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ?**

How did Our Lord die? By the separation of His Blood from His Body. The priest, in the person of Christ, the Eternal High Priest, consecrates each separately.

**Q. 872. When is the Holy Eucharist a Sacrament, and when is it a sacrifice?**

*A. The Holy Eucharist is a Sacrament when we receive it in Holy Communion and when it remains in the Tabernacle of the Altar. It is a sacrifice when it is offered up at Mass by the separate Consecration of the bread and wine, which signifies the separation of Our Lord's blood from His body when He died on the Cross. (The Baltimore Catechism)*

**How can bread become the Body of Christ?**

This is indeed a mystery. But we can consider that even in the natural order, when we eat a slice of bread it becomes our body. By a natural process ordained by God food is transformed into bodies. If God wants to do this instantly through the power of words, would it not be unreasonable of us to say 'It is impossible!' He is God after all.

*'The Council of Trent summarises the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation' CCC 1376*

*The power of words: When someone with authority speaks, reality changes. When your teacher says 'You have 5 minutes detention', well, whether you like it or not, there is a new reality, the reality of your 5 minute detention. Imagine when God speaks!*

*'That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that cannot be apprehended by the senses,' says St. Thomas, 'but only by faith, which relies on divine authority.' For this reason, in a commentary on Luke 22:19 ('This is my body which is given for you.'). St. Cyril says: 'Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Saviour in faith, for since He is the Truth, He cannot lie'. CCC 1381*

**What is**

We have put ourselves on the altar with Our Blessed Lord. We have died with Him. But no-one ever dies with Christ without rising to new life with Him.

When the Body and Blood are comingled we rise to New Life with Him. We have given our lives to Him

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

**Holy** and He says, as it were,  
"You can share my Eternal Life."

*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. 'Calvary and the Mass' Ven. Fulton Sheen*

**Communion?**

**Why must  
we eat  
His flesh  
and drink  
His blood?**

First of all, because He told us to. Because He has said it and His word is true. But is it not true that we live by what we slay? Doesn't all of our food have to die to keep us alive? And for eternal life do we not live by consuming the Body and Blood of the Eternal one, the One Whom we crucified?

*'Do we fully realise 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 the Calvary; namely, we live by what we slay. All nature witnesses this truth; our bodies live by the slaying of the beasts 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.'*

*'Calvary and the Mass' The Venerable Fulton Sheen*

**How should we  
behave at Holy  
Mass**

If we remember three things, we will know how...

1. He is really there in the tabernacle...
2. During Holy Mass, we are at the foot of the Cross, present at His death...
3. We are with Our Lady...

The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent outside of Mass. As faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species. It is for this reason that the tabernacle should be located in an especially worthy place in the church and should be constructed in such a way that it emphasizes and manifests the truth of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. CCC

*It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass. ~ St. Pio of Pietrelcina*