

## **The Mass – A Catholic Response**

*(A Catholic response to Protestant objections)*

Many Protestants will charge that during the Mass, Catholics re-sacrifice of Christ on the cross. They claim that the Church teaches that Jesus dies often with every Mass – which is in direct contrast with **Rom. 6:9-10** where it says he died only *once*. Finally, they level the charge that Catholicism teaches that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient and must be repeated over and over again – that all sacrifices have ceased because of his perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. These allegations all have one thing in common: They are patently *false*.

These falsehoods are simply a misunderstanding of the sacrifice of the Mass, as well as a misrepresentation of the facts. Many articles and books have been written on the subject by Protestant authors – none more quoted than **Loraine Boettner's "Roman Catholicism"**. His diatribe against the Catholic Church is filled with one false accusation after another as well as what appears to be an abject ignorance of history and a perversion of Scripture. One should seriously question publications such as these that bear false witness and present a counterfeit version of the truth. One other glaring problem with these charges is they illustrate a rather ignorant approach to the understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven as an eternal state.

First of all, to understand Christ's sacrifice on the cross we must first try to understand the concept of eternity. God is outside of time. There is no past or future with God – everything is in the eternal *now*.

When the authors of the Bible wrote to the early Church about God, they wrote in terms that humans could understand. These terminologies that apply human traits to God are called *anthropomorphisms*. For instance, in regard to the parting of the sea in **Exodus 15:8** we read, "*By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up.*" We know that God is spirit and has no nostrils but this is the way it is conveyed to us so that we can understand. **1 Sam. 15:35** tells us that God "*regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.*" God has no regrets because he doesn't make errors but this is a way for the reader to come to an understanding of the Creator.

The Holy Spirit, through the human instruments he used to write the Scriptures, sometimes used simple words and phrases to convey to mere humans what God was saying.

In the same way, we are told in **Luke 23:43** that Jesus said to penitent criminal on the cross next to him, "*Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*" Are we to assume that Jesus would be in heaven on that Friday with the criminal? **1 Pet. 3:19** emphatically states that after his death, Jesus "*...also went to preach to the spirits in prison.*" We also read in **John 20:17**, *Jesus said to her (Mary Magdalene), "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*"

Finally, **2 Pet. 3:8** tells us about the reality of eternity when he writes, "*But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a*

*thousand years like one day.*” When Jesus told the thief that *today* he would be with him in Paradise – he was speaking in the *eternal* sense.

It is with this rudimentary understanding of the concept of eternity that we can begin to comprehend the meaning of **Rev. 13:8**, when it tells us that Christ was crucified *before the foundation of the world*. His is an eternal sacrifice. **Revelation 5:6** says, “*And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.*”

In God's eyes, Jesus is crucified *before* the foundation of the world and ever-present as a sacrifice before him now. Jesus is neither “*re-sacrificed*” nor does he “*die often*” in the Mass as is falsely charged. The Church recognizes that God is eternal and is not confined by the restraints of time as we are. As the Scriptures state, Jesus was *always* our Paschal Lamb - the perfect sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins.

The “*unbloody sacrifice*” that is referred to means that Jesus is *not* killed again and does *not* spill his blood repeatedly. His blood was shed for us on Calvary - not in every single Catholic Church around the world. The Mass represents - and is a celebration of his eternal sacrifice for our sins.

There is no contradiction between Scripture and what the Catholic Church has practiced from the very beginning in the 1st century. The doctrines of the Church as they pertain to *the Mass* (**Acts 2:46-47, 1 Cor. 10:16**), *the Eucharist* (**Matt. 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, John 6:29-71, 1 Cor. 11:27-30**), *Confession* (**Matt. 16:15, Matt. 18:15-18, John 20:21-23, 2:Cor. 2:10, 5:18-20**), *Baptism* (**Ezk. 36:25-28, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 10:48, John 3:5, Mark 16:16, Eph. 4:5**) and so on, are well-documented in the Bible as well as in the writings of the Early Church Fathers from the 1<sup>st</sup> century on.

The verses cited as “evidence” against the sacrifice of the Mass, including **Heb. 7:27-28, 9:11-12, 9:24-26, 28, 10:10-14, 18** and **Romans 6:9-10** speak to a useless *re-sacrifice* presented by flawed human beings who aim to put him to death again. The Mass is anything but that as it represents Jesus’ perfect sacrifice that is presented to God as an eternal propitiation for sin.

The **Book of Revelation** is filled with similarities between Mass on earth and that of the heavenly liturgy. Here is a list of some of them:

**Rev. 1:10** speaks of the heavenly liturgy being celebrated on the Lord's day. Catholics are obliged to attend mass on Sunday (the Lord’s Day).

**Rev. 1:12, 2:5** speaks of lampstands or “*Menorahs*” in heaven. They are also used in the mass here on earth.

**Rev. 1:13, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 15:6, 19:13-14** tells us about priests wearing special vestments in the heavenly liturgy. Here on earth, Catholic priests also wear liturgical vestments when celebrating Mass.

**Rev. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3; 16:11** speaks of a penitential rite going on in heaven – just like the in the Mass on earth.

**Rev. 15:3-4** speaks of the “*Gloria*” being recited in heaven. You will hear this recited during the Mass on earth.

**Rev. 4:4, 5:14; 11:16, 14:3, 19:4** mentions the *presbuteros(oi)* (*priests*) in heaven. On earth, the priest offers Jesus’ eternal and ongoing sacrifice during the Mass.

**Rev. 5:8, 6:9-11, 8:3-4** speaks of the saints in heaven interceding on our behalf – just as they are petitioned in the Mass.

**Rev. 4:8** speaks of heaven's un-ending hymn of praise to God, “*Holy, Holy, Holy*”. This very same prayer is recited in the Mass.

**Rev. 2:17** speaks of manna in heaven that is given to the faithful. Likewise, during the Mass, we receive the true manna - the Eucharist.

**Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4** speaks of incense being used in heaven which has been part of the celebration of the Mass from the beginning.

**Rev. 6:9** tells us about the martyrs under the heavenly altar which is mirrored by the Church's tradition of having relics of saints under the altars of our churches on earth.

**Rev. 5** speaks of the Lamb (describing Jesus). During the Mass, Jesus is described as the *Lamb of God* during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

**Rev. 8:3, 11:1, 14:18, 16:7** speaks of an altar being present in heaven – which illustrates that an eternal sacrifice is being offered. That sacrifice is the very same one being offered on the altar during the Mass.

**Rev. 14:4** speaks of those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are celibate. In the same way, our celibate priests and religious here on earth follow the Lord.

**Rev. 15:7, 16:1-4, 8, 10, 12, 17; 21:9** speaks of chalices (bowls) being used in the heavenly liturgy. Likewise, chalices are used to offer our Lord’s eternal sacrifice on earth during the Mass.

**Rev. 17, 19:9** speaks of consuming the Lamb at the marriage celebration in Heaven. This is done at every single Mass on earth during Communion.

**Rev. 19:1, 3, 4, 6** speaks of the “*Alleluia*” being recited in heaven. You will find this recited at every Mass here on earth.

Finally, in **Rev. 5:14; 7:12; 19:4**, we read that heaven's concluding liturgical prayer “*Amen*” is the very one that is recited at the end of the Mass on earth.

Most reputable Protestant theologians will agree that the Catholic Church was established by Jesus, although they may have a problem with the name “*Catholic*”. Where they depart from this fact is when they claim that the Church went into apostasy some later point (*most say the 4<sup>th</sup> century*). Many of them claim that a faithful, “*invisible remnant*” carried the faith through the years that the “*corrupt Church*” was in charge. They claim that the Reformation was the manifestation of this invisible remnant coming to the forefront. Others say that the Church ceased to exist in God’s eyes until it was revived

during the Reformation. These claims would render Jesus a liar because he assured Peter and the Apostles in **Matt. 16:18** that the gates of hell would *not* prevail against his Church. This would also mean that nobody was saved (except for the invisible remnant) from about the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the 16<sup>th</sup> century - a claim which is not only preposterous but extremely arrogant, given the fact that they can offer no proof for this myth.

### **Early Church Teachings on the Mass**

From the 1<sup>st</sup> Century on, we see that Mass was being celebrated by the Early Church. Protestant charges that the Mass developed over the centuries are rendered null and void by the testimonies of the Early Church Fathers themselves:

#### **The Didache (*Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*)**

Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist: but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice [Matt. 5:23—24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, "Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations."

*[Mal. 1:11, 14] (Didache 14 [A.D. 70]).*

#### **Clement 1**

Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its sacrifices. Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and who have obtained a fruitful and perfect release.

*(Letter to the Corinthians 44:4-5 [A.D. 80]).*

#### **Ignatius of Antioch**

Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his blood, and one single altar of sacrifice—even as there is also but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.

*(Letter to the Philadelphians 4 [A.D. 110]).*

#### **Justin Martyr**

God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles" [Mal. 1:10-11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist.

*(Dialogue with Trypho 41 [A.D. 155]).*

#### **Irenaeus**

He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, "This is my body." The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he

confessed to be his blood. He taught the new sacrifice of the new covenant, of which Malachi, one of the twelve [minor] prophets, had signified beforehand: "You do not do my will, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty" [Mal. 1:10-11]. By these words he makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to him, and indeed, a pure one, for his name is glorified among the Gentiles.

*(Against Heresies 4:17:5 [A.D. 189]).*

### **Cyprian**

If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and if he commanded that this be done in commemoration of himself, then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ.

*(Letters 63:14 [A.D. 253]).*

### **Serapion**

Accept therewith our hallowing too, as we say, "Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth is full of your glory." Heaven is full, and full is the earth, with your magnificent glory, Lord of virtues. Full also is this sacrifice, with your strength and your communion; for to you we offer this living sacrifice, this unbloody oblation.

*(Prayer of the Eucharistic Sacrifice 13:12-16 [A.D. 350]).*

### **Cyril**

Then, having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before him, that he may make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ, for whatsoever the Holy Spirit has touched is surely sanctified and changed. Then, upon the completion of the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless worship, over that propitiatory victim we call upon God for the common peace of the churches, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted; and in summary, we all pray and offer this sacrifice for all who are in need.

*(Catechetical Lectures 23:7-8 [A.D. 350]).*

### **Ambrose**

We saw the prince of priests coming to us, we saw and heard him offering his blood for us. We follow, inasmuch as we are able, being priests, and we offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. Even if we are of but little merit, still, in the sacrifice, we are honorable. Even if Christ is not now seen as the one who offers the sacrifice, nevertheless it is he himself that is offered in sacrifice here on earth when the body of Christ is offered. Indeed, to offer himself he is made visible in us, he whose word makes holy the sacrifice that is offered.

*(Commentaries on twelve Psalms of David 38:25 [A.D. 389]).*