



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week, we looked at the Institution Narrative and the Consecration. I want to spend a little more time with this. At the beginning of the year, I mentioned that we can look at the Eucharist as presence, sacrifice and communion. Here, in the institution narrative, we see the image of sacrifice.

The people looking on the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday would not automatically have thought "Sacrifice." Sacrifice literally means "to make holy," and is an offering to Almighty God. The Israelites were used to sacrificial offerings of animals in the Temple (oxen, sheep, goats), as well as other sacrifices (offerings of grain, libations [liquid poured out], and thanksgiving sacrifices). In the binding of Isaac incident (which we heard about a few weeks ago), God made it clear that He did not desire human sacrifice. To look on Jesus crucified, they would have seen capital punishment, suffering, death, but not sacrifice. It is only in light of the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and the Resurrection, that we can see this act as *the* sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Son to the Father.

Jesus, when He foreshadows what will happen on the Cross the next day, by taking bread and saying, **"This is my body, which will be given up for you,"** and taking wine saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you"** (Luke 22:19, 20), is saying to us, "I am not just dying, but My death is a sacrifice to My Father – the new Passover, the completion of what Isaac did on Mt. Moriah."

As I mentioned last week, the whole mystery of Christ's redemptive action is contained in the mystery of the Eucharist. When we enter into Mass, we are at Calvary again. It's as if the actions of Christ on the Cross 2000 years ago were brought up into Heaven and eternity, covered all of time, and then, come down to us at each Mass. Or better yet, that we are raised into Heaven, and so enter into the eternal moment of Christ's sacrifice (I encourage you to watch the seven-minute film "The Veil Removed" on YouTube). As we constantly say to those who claim we are "re-sacrificing Christ" – No! We are not re-sacrificing Him, but entering into the eternal moment of His sacrifice from this moment here and now.

The sacrifices of the old covenant were often meant for forgiveness – to take away sins. They Israelites understood, though, that the sacrifice of bulls did not actually forgive sins, but rather it was that they partook in the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac, and their perfect faith. Looking back now, we see that Abraham's sacrifice only had merit because it was a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do on the Cross. It is His sacrifice on the Cross that brings about the true forgiveness of sins, washing away all guilt, making us right with God, and so opening for us the gates of Heaven. As mentioned above, we enter into this mystery here and now through the grace and power of the Eucharist. At the Mass, we enter – with all our mess, with all our struggles, and with all our gifts – into the sacrifice of Christ.

This is our transformation. His Body, broken for us like the lamb led to the slaughter (see Isaiah 53:7), becomes the Lamb who was slain who received power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing (see Revelation 5:12). He makes all things new through the love He gave on the Cross. May we recognize this every time we go to Mass, and hear the words, "THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU."