



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We've been examining the Eucharist as Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion. Today, we're going to move from Presence to Sacrifice. The work of redemption that Jesus did on the Cross – saving us from the power of sin and death – is intimately connected to the Last Supper. At the Last Supper – the night before He died for us – Jesus said, **"This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me... This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you"** (Luke 22:19, 20). Jesus speaks of His body being given up for us, His blood being shed for us. These prefigure in sign what He will do the next day on the Cross.

This shows us that the Mass is a participation in the Cross of Christ. When we are at Mass, we are a quarter inch from heaven... if only we could have the veil removed from our eyes (to get a sense of this, I strongly encourage you to watch the short video "The Veil Removed," found free on YouTube: [youtube.com/watch?v=OOLZDaTqIaM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOLZDaTqIaM)). When we come to the Mass, we are taken out of time and brought into eternity, where, with the Angels and Saints, we are before the throne of the Lamb. Here we participate with the Son of God – the Lamb who was slain – offering true worship and praise to God the Father. We are not "re-crucifying" Jesus, but, rather, entering anew into the mystery of what He did 2000 years ago to save us. With this in mind, I'm going to spend the next several articles breaking down the parts of the Mass, how to prepare and how to enter more fully into this mystery.

Preparation for Mass is very important. We cannot transition from the chaos of our lives into the eternal realities without some sort of preparation. There are a lot of ways to prepare, but I'll give just a few practical things we can do.

First, I encourage you to read and pray through the readings for Mass. You can read through them throughout the week. If you don't have a personal Missal, you can always find the readings online on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website (bible.usccb.org). One way to do pray through the readings is to read through all of the readings on Monday. Through the rest of the week, you can read through each reading (one a day, including the Psalm) more slowly, asking the Lord to enlighten you with His wisdom. Ask the Lord, "What are you saying to me today?" for surely, as a loving Father, He wants to speak to you today through His word. When you get to Mass on Saturday afternoon or Sunday, you will not be hearing them for the first time, and you'll be more open to what God is saying in that moment.

Second, I would encourage you to do a daily examination of conscience. When you look back on your day and begin to recognize where God was moving in your life, and how you responded (either cooperating with that grace or rejecting it), you will be more open to seeing God move powerfully through the Mass. Also, when we get to the Penitential Act of the Mass (you know, the "Lord, have mercy" part), you'll actually be able to bring before the Lord those areas in need of healing and forgiveness. I also encourage you to get to confession regularly. When we receive our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we want to be *ready* to receive Him. Use this analogy – if a husband and wife were in the middle of a heated argument, there would need to be apologies and forgiveness before they entered into the marriage act (if it were truly to be an act of self-giving love to each other). So too with Jesus, if we need to apologize to Jesus, especially when in a state of mortal sin. When in some way we have rejected Jesus and His love, we need to get to confession to "make up" before we become one body in Communion. I encourage you to make a regular time for confession. Some do this once a month, others more or less frequently. Whatever you do, make it a habit; mark it on your calendar. This will help you prepare more for Mass.

Next week, I'll look at more immediate preparation for Mass.