

## **Script - Episode 1 - The Mass: Understanding its Significance**

In Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, on the night before He died, Jesus of Nazareth gathered his twelve disciples with Him to celebrate the Passover meal.

What took place there, at this Passover meal, is the mystery at the heart of every Mass.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying:

"Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you."

In a similar way, taking the chalice of wine, He gave thanks and gave the chalice to His disciples saying:

"Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. "DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME."

Our Lord commanded "DO THIS" and so this - the Mass - is what we Catholics do. The words of Jesus - "this is my body" and "this is my blood" - have been meticulously preserved and repeated over bread and wine all over the world for 2,000 years.

"DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME" does not simply mean recalling a past event. Rather this memorial involves evoking the past in such a way that a past event is made effective and fruitful here and now.

The Mass makes the death and resurrection of Jesus and its saving effects present each time it is celebrated. Jesus himself is personally present in the Mass as our crucified and risen Saviour. Whether it is a Mass celebrated with thousands in a basilica or in a small chapel, the Son of God himself comes upon our altars and dwells in our midst. And when we participate in the Mass, we share in Christ's saving sacrifice, his death and resurrection.

Worship of God in the Mass is the most distinctive activity of Christ's Church and the central focus of a vital Christian life. Active participation in the Mass is the very soul of participation in the life of the Church

The Mass is called in several names and each of these names helps us to grasp the diverse and infinite riches of this liturgy.

The term "**Eucharist**" comes from the Greek for "thanksgiving". In the Eucharist, we express gratitude for God's many gifts and graces in our lives,

especially for creation; salvation through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and sanctification.

We call it the **"The Lord's Supper"** to recall Jesus' Last Supper with his apostles on Holy Thursday. The symbolism of a meal also prefigures the heavenly banquet, the wedding of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem, where God will unite us once and for all with our brothers and sisters.

**"Breaking of the Bread"** is the church's earliest term for the Mass. It brings to mind Jesus' celebration of the Passover meal in anticipation of breaking himself for us so we might have eternal life.

The name **"Eucharistic Assembly"** highlights how we celebrate it in the midst of the assembled faithful who are the visible expression of the church.

It is also **"Holy Communion"** because it unites us to Christ and forms us into his body, the Church.

Finally, we call it the **"Holy Mass"**. This term derives from the sending forth of the faithful at the dismissal rite: "Go forth, the Mass is ended." The way every Mass ends with "GO" is at the heart of what we come to Mass for - to be empowered by God and sent forth again. We are not simply leaving the Church building but rather we are entering the world with a mission to serve Christ and to bear witness through our Christian living.

Every Mass is a unique privilege of a personal encounter with Christ. It is our opportunity to meet Him, to listen to Him and to receive Him.

When Jesus meets people in the gospels, their lives are invariably changed forever. There are many examples of these meetings in the Gospels: Zacchaeus, the Levi, the Samaritan woman, Peter and John. But then there are also those who came face-to-face with our Lord but let pass an opportunity to bring their needs before Him. They stood in the presence of the God, and yet because they were focused on something or someone else, they missed that opportunity.

What about us? How many times have we met with Christ in Holy Communion and what has changed in our lives? Have we make it impossible for Jesus to act in us? He touched us but did we respond? He came to us but did we receive Him in our hearts? Imagine how many miracles have passed us by because we came to Mass with ears that did not hear and eyes that did not see?

What we do is a consequence of what we believe. If we believe that Jesus is God and that He is really present in the Eucharist, then we will make sure that we are well prepared when we go to receive Him.

Knowing more about the Mass is a first step towards deepening our love and devotion for it. The Mass is rich and complex; every word and gesture has a

history, a significance, a meaning. The more we know of the profound significance of each part of the Mass, the more we can give ourselves to Christ.

Sometimes during Mass, we aimlessly go through the motions and find that our minds often wander. If we are absent-minded then we are by definition not completely present. How then can Christ touch us if we are not there? Active participation and giving ourselves completely to the Lord for this little bit of time is what we should always strive for.

Let us come to each Mass to greet Jesus with three gifts.

The first is our offering of Joy. In her song of praise, Mary proclaims: "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour". Indeed, the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. Let us come and express all our joy to Christ because we are meeting with Him again.

The second is the our offering of Love. Because we love God, we want to offer something that will be pleasing to God and Scripture teaches us how : an act of repentance and contrition because "a broken spirit and contrite heart, God will not despise"; an act of forgiveness and reconciliation because Jesus teaches us: "First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"; an act of charity for whatever we do for one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we do it for Christ. Coming to each Mass with this gesture also link the Mass to our daily life and to our duty as disciples of Christ.

The third is our offering of Faith. We must unleash the power of the prayer that says: "Lord, if you want, you can heal me!" This was the prayer of the sick, the blind, the paralytics and the lepers. Like them, we come to Mass to entrust to the Lord our own sufferings, physical afflictions, our personal trials , our own spiritual blindness, weaknesses and sins. We join the countless afflicted souls, from the time of Jesus to today, who have found comfort and strength when they cried out to Him, "Lord, have mercy."

We have been called by Christ to faith and to conversion. We come together to praise God, to take part in Christ's sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper. When we come for Mass, we come with our whole selves and our whole lives. We present ourselves before our God and say "Here I am, Lord, I have come to do your will".