

## THE BEAUTY OF THE MASS—5

The roots of the Mass lay in the Last Supper, the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his friends. Jesus instituted the Mass or the Eucharist at the Last Supper (cf. Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The Second Vatican Council's document on the Sacred Liturgy states that Jesus gave us the Eucharist *"in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until He should come again, and so entrust to His beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which 'Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us'"* (SC-47).

When Jesus said to His Apostles, *"Do this in memory of me,"* we believe Jesus meant those words for each one of us, not just the priest.

So Sunday Mass is a very solemn obligation. Celebrating Sunday Mass is the way that we fulfill the Third Commandment: *"Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day."* We need to gather on Sunday and celebrate the Holy Eucharist so that we don't forget who we are and whose we are. We need to gather in order to worship and thank God for His goodness and mercy. We need to come together and receive Christ in His holy Word and his holy Body and Blood so that we will have the wisdom, the strength, the support, the encouragement that the Mass offers in order to bring Christ to the world.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the action both of Christ and His Church. As the document *"The Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery"* teaches us, *"In the Eucharist, Christ perpetuates in an un-bloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross, offering Himself to the Father for the world's salvation through the ministry of priests. The Church, the Spouse and minister of Christ, performs together with Him the role of priest and victim, offers Him to the Father*

*and at the same time, makes a total offering of herself together with Him.”*

At Mass, we unite ourselves to the sacrifice of Christ and are nourished by His sacrificial Body and Blood that strengthens us to live Christ’s sacrificial love in our world: to bring justice to our world and to witness to the truth by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and visiting prisoners and the sick.

When we come to Mass, we expect the celebrant and the other liturgical ministers to be prepared and competent. However, they are not the only source of life for our parish worship. All parish members must be responsible for the quality of worship. It is no longer O.K. to wander into church and sit passively in the pew. We must participate.

When people say they don’t get anything out of Mass, they are worshipping for the wrong reasons. We come to give something, or better, we come to give ourselves to and with Christ, in thanks to God for all that God has given us.

It is our responsibility to participate in Liturgy. This means that all of us must work to make the Liturgy prayerful and meaningful. “*Liturgy*” means “*public work*” or the “*work of the people*.” All of us must work at making the Mass an act of praise and thanksgiving to God through and with Christ, His Son. This means that each one of us must prepare and participate in the sacred liturgy in a “*full, conscious and active*” way.