

The Catholic Church of St. Ann



St. Ann, our Parish Patroness, pray for us!

St. Ann Church

45 Anderson Street; Raritan, NJ 08869

Telephone: 908-725-1008 • Fax: 908-707-1915

Website: www.stannparish.com

Email: info@stannparish.com

Facebook: The Catholic Church of St. Ann- Raritan, NJ

*Under the Pastoral Care of the Priests and Brothers
of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri*
www.raritanoratory.org

V. Rev. Jeffrey Calia, C.O., Provost

Rev. Thomas Odorizzi, C.O., Pastor
todorizzi@stannparish.com

Rev. Peter Cebulka, C.O., Head of School,
St. Ann Classical School, K-8

Parish Office Staff

Deacon Sal Bon.iglio,
Mrs. Christine Esposito,
Mr. Lou Falconeri,
Mr. Anthony Nardino
Ms. Barbara Russell,
Sr. Ella Mae McDonald, MPF

Business Administrator
Social Ministry, Office Support
Plant Manager
Dir. of Liturgy & Sacred Music
Administrative Assistant
Dir. of Religious Education

Community of Religious Teachers of St. Lucy Filippini

Sr. Phyllis Vella, MPF,
Sr. Dolores Toscano, MPF,
Sr. Ella Mae McDonald, MPF

Superior
Pastoral Associate
Dir. of Religious Education

THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

The Lord's Day Masses

Sat.:	4 pm	St. Joseph Church
	5 pm	Holy Trinity (LS)
Sun.:	8 am	St. Ann Church
	9 am	St. Joseph Church
	10 am	St. Ann Church
	10 am	Shrine of the Bl. Sacrament (LS, Latin EF)
	11 am	Holy Trinity
	12 pm	Shrine (LS, Spanish)
	5 pm	St. Ann Church

LS = Livestreamed on YouTube & Facebook by the Raritan Oratory.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday,	after the 9am Mass,	St. Ann
Saturday,	3-3:30pm,	St. Joseph
Wednesday,	11-12noon,	Holy Trinity
Wednesday,	7-8pm,	St. Ann

—or by appointment—

Daily Masses

NOTE: Daily Mass will no longer be livestreamed

Mon.	8 am St. Joseph	12:15 pm Shrine	7 pm St. Ann
Tue.	7 am St. Ann	12:15 pm Shrine	7 pm Holy Trinity
Wed.	7 am St. Ann	12:15 pm Shrine	
Thu.	7 am St. Ann	12:15 pm Shrine	
Fri.	8 am St. Joseph	12:15 pm Shrine	7 pm Holy Trinity
	7pm St. Ann, for First Friday only		
Sat.	9 am St. Ann		

Note: All scheduled Mass intentions will be honored, at the same church location and as closely to the original scheduled time as possible, unless instructed otherwise.

Saturday, August 22, 9am Mass & Confessions Canceled

This cancelation is so that the Raritan Congregation of the Oratory can all attend Br. Fredy's ordination.

Live-Streamed Mass

A. er next weekend, August 16, the Oratory will no longer live-stream any Sunday Masses.

Here are a couple of other options to a end online Mass:

- **Ascension Presents** YouTube channel, Fr. Mike Schmitz;
- **EWTN Global Catholic Network** (www.ewtn.com)

Announcement of Ordination

The Members of the Raritan Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri announce with great joy the upcoming presbyteral ordination of Br. John Fredy Triana Beltran, C.O. Br. John Fredy will be ordained by the Most Rev. James F. Checchio, Bishop of Metuchen, on Saturday, August 22, 2020, the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, at 9:30 am, at the Blue Army Shrine, Washington, NJ. Please remember Br. John Fredy in your prayers as he prepares for his ministry as a priest.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - August 9, 2020

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - August 9, 2020

HELP PROMOTE OUR SCHOOL

St. Ann School

29 Second Avenue, Raritan, NJ 08869

Telephone: 908-725-7787

Fax: 908-541-9335

Website: www.stannparish.com/school

Facebook: St. Ann School

REGISTER/RE-REGISTER NOW! 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Call for more information or
to make an appointment.

Grades K-8

Discover how a Catholic Classical Education at St. Ann School can inspire your child to be a joyous learner, filled with wonder and awe for all of creation. Our new academic approach allows for students to be formed and immersed in virtue, truth, beauty and goodness through their everyday curriculum.



"Enter and learn...leave and
serve bringing Christ into the
world."



St. Ann's K-8 Classical School is preparing for in-person classes starting in the Fall. Fr. Peter Cebulka, Head of School, is working with a Task Force and is developing plans for a safe return to St. Ann School.

Many other schools, because of the large number of students and limited classroom space, will have different arrangements — partial day or partial week attendance, remote learning only or hybrid learning.

St. Ann's School has the capacity for more students to attend. Our school may be an attractive option to parents who want their child to have a regular in-school experience.

Contact St. Ann School for information about enrollment in our K-8 classical school. **Help us also get word out to other parents you may know who are not familiar with our school.**

ACTION ALERT on behalf of our students

The COVID-19 crisis has put Catholic schools throughout the U.S. at serious risk of not re-opening in the fall and being permanently closed.

Thanks to your recent advocacy, proposed legislation entitled **Alexander-Scott "School Choice Now Act"** has been introduced that will give emergency funding to scholarship organizations in each state and provide permanent federal tax credits for contributions to scholarship granting organizations.

Please ask our US Senators to include the School Choice Now Act in the next COVID relief package.

Please click through to our Voter Voice system to put your message in front of the US Senate! Voter Voice - NJ Catholic Conference, [h. ps://njcatholic.org/faith-in-action](https://njcatholic.org/faith-in-action)

THE ASK: 1. That private school students receive Equity in COVID-19 relief services offered to public schools
2. Tuition assistance for struggling families
3. Tax deductions or credits for families' education expenses to help in the struggle to pay for school tuition now.

THE ACTION: Please click through to this link: <https://njcatholic.org/faith-in-action>, Voter Voice - NJ Catholic Conference to follow the prompts on NJ Catholic Conference's Voter Voice.

Please do this as soon as possible as this is a fast-moving issue where the impact of our voices can be heard and make a difference for our families. It only takes a few minutes to ask our Senators to help our Catholic School Families stay in their Catholic schools.

THE RATIONALE: It is important that our leaders in Washington hear from us how important Catholic school is for our children. The *School Choice Now Act* will help our schools be there for our students, families, and teachers. Our voices are needed now.

PLEASE CLICK HERE NOW: <https://njcatholic.org/faith-in-action>, Voter Voice - NJ Catholic Conference

Thank you for answering the call to support our students by advocating for them!

OTHER UPDATES AND NOTICES

Social Concerns Ministry

Social Ministry has continuously assisting those in need during the pandemic through the donations of many parishioners. We were able to assist with food, clothing, and rental assistance. Furthermore, all of the homebound parishioners have been contacted to see if they had shoppers or other needs and were getting through this pandemic.

The St. Dorothy Garden has been maintained by Susan Pick and her son Lucas Pick. They planted and have been caring for the garden. Also, they are currently picking the vegetables and delivering to the families in need in our area. Each family receives cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, and peppers, and string beans currently. All our very grateful and thank us.

Water Pipe Replacement Job

We received a couple more contributions for the purpose of replacing the main water pipe for the school.

A total of \$2,300 has now been donated so far. The job will cost \$16,000. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and generous support.

Eucharistic Holy Hour Next Sunday

All are invited by the Oratorian community to take part in a Eucharistic Holy Hour on next Sunday, **August 16, 2020 at 3:30 pm** at the Catholic Church of St. Ann, Raritan. This monthly hour of Adoration includes readings, song, silent prayer, and concludes with Benediction.

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Nineteenth Sunday, Ordinary Time

1 KGS 19:9A, 11-13A; PS 85:9-14; ROM 9:1-5; MT 14:22-23

Stewardship spirituality invites us to surrender control of our lives to God in grateful recognition of the simple truth that all we have is a gift from Him.

While today's readings remind us that God is always in control of His creation and His creatures, the readings also illustrate what amazing things can happen when we fully permit God to take charge of our lives when we embrace the stewardship way of life.

In our First Reading, from the First Book of Kings, Elijah the prophet is instructed to go outside and wait for the Lord. Elijah goes out and a series of spectacular phenomena occur — strong and heavy winds that crush rocks, followed by an earthquake, and then a fire. Yet, the Lord was not found in any of those. Rather, the Almighty was found in a “tiny whispering sound.” How unexpected!

We must always remember that our wonderfully-mysterious God sometimes comes into our lives in the most unexpected ways. Do we stay alert and sensitive to His presence to receive the instruction and the countless gifts He is always sending us?



It is all too easy to fail to recognize His presence and gifts in our lives. Taking things for granted — friends, family, material gifts, even God Himself — seems to be part of our human condition.

Paul points this out in our Second Reading, from his letter to the Romans. He laments that some of his fellow Israelites — God's chosen people who have received so many gifts from God, including the law, the promises, and the patriarchs — fail to see the gift of Christ now offered to them.

This happens to us modern-day disciples, too. We have received all the riches of Church teaching and the Scriptures, and the overwhelming treasury of graces in the sacraments, including the gift of Christ Himself in the Eucharist. Our family, our friends, our work, our parish — all these things are gifts from God, as well. When we take our eyes off God, we fail to see that all is a gift from Him, we lose trust in Him, and we do not live out our lives as a grateful response to Him.

In our Gospel passage from Matthew, we learn that Peter makes this very mistake. Just after the multiplication of the loaves and fish, Jesus sends the disciples in a boat ahead of Him to the other side of the shore. Later that evening, Jesus casually strolls up to the boat, walking on the sea. Peter says, “Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water,” and Jesus responds, “Come.” As Peter begins to walk on the water, he momentarily takes his eyes off Jesus to notice the strong wind surrounding them. With that, he sinks.

But what if Peter had not taken his eyes off Christ? What if he had not allowed that moment of doubt, that lack of trust to overcome him? What a grand adventure he could have had out there walking on the sea with Jesus! When we take our eyes off Christ, the many blessings He has given us, and the loving way He treats us, we sink, too.

When we embrace the stewardship way of life and let go of the tight hold over our money, time and talents, our lives become a grand adventure, rooted firmly and gratefully in the God Who always cares for us.

— Stewardship Reflections by Catholic Stewardship Consultants



The Catholic bishops of the United States are pleased to offer once again to the Catholic faithful **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship**, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics. This statement represents our guidance for Catholics in the exercise of their rights and duties as participants in our democracy. We urge our pastors, lay and religious faithful, and all people of good will to use this statement to help form their consciences; to teach those entrusted to their care; to contribute to civil and respectful public dialogue; and to shape political choices in the coming election in light of Catholic teaching. The statement lifts up our dual heritage as both faithful Catholics and American citizens with rights and duties as participants in the civil order.

Parish Policy on Distribution of Campaign Materials

During this election season, our parish will be utilizing materials from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and *Civilize It*. These materials are non-partisan and seek to help Catholics engage in the political process with an informed conscience, as our faith calls us to do. Distribution of other election-related materials on church property will not be permitted. Among other activities, posting flyers or signs, passing out campaign literature, and leaving unauthorized materials anywhere in the building or on car windshields, are prohibited. We appreciate your compliance with this policy.



Hudson James O'Neill
Son of Peter & Paige
Baptized 7/26/2020

Liliana Isabelle Marconi
Daughter of David & Meghan
Baptized 8/2/2020

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - August, 9 2020

Mass Intentions

Monday, August 10

7:00 pm

Tuesday, August 11

7:00 am Rose Sando by Rosary Altar Society

Wednesday, August 12

7:00 am

Thursday, August 13

7:00 am Antonio D'Anna by the D'Anna Famly

Friday, August 14

No Mass at St. Ann's

**Saturday, August 15- Solemnity of the Assumption
of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

9:00 am Josephine Forktus by husband and sons

**Sunday, August 16- Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary
Time**

8:00 am, 10 am and 5:00 pm

Col. Frank L. Carlone by the Carlone Family

Frank P. DeFina by sisters Josie and Maria

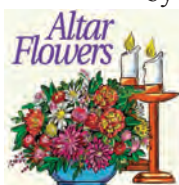
Harold and Ann Lukas by the family

People of the Parish

Weekly Lamp and Flower Intentions

Tabernacle Lamp for Antonio D'Anna
by the D'Anna Family

St. Joseph Lamp for John Kowal Sr.
by Frances Phillips and Eleanor Sian



Altar Flowers for Antonio D'Anna
by the D'Anna Family

This Week's Daily Bible Readings

Sunday

1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a; Rom 9:1-5; Mt 14:22-33

Monday

2 Cor 9:6-10; Jn 12:24-26

Tuesday

Ez 2:8-3:4;
Mt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14

Wednesday

Ez 9:1-7, 10:18-22; Mt 18:15-20

Thursday

Ez 12:1-12; Mt 18:21-19:15

Friday

Ez 16:1-15, 60, 63 or 16:59-63; Mt 19:3-12

Saturday

Rv 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10ab;
1 Cor 15:20-27; Lk 1:39-56



2020 Bishop's Annual Appeal

Stepping Forward in Faith: Grace in Action

Thank you to all who have given so generously to the 2020 Bishop's Annual Appeal. If you have not made a pledge, there is still time to participate. Mail your gift to: Diocese of Metuchen, Bishop's Annual Appeal, PO Box 4000, Metuchen, NJ 08840-4000 or give online at www.diometuchen.org/BAA.

St. Ann Parish BAA Update

211 Donors as of July 30, 2020

Amount Pledged: \$64,057 91.5% pledged

Amount Paid: \$61,116

Parish Goal: \$70,000

Thanks to all who have made a contribution so far.

Parishioner Financial Support

THANK YOU to all who are mailing or dropping off your envelopes or check contributions in support of the operation of St. Ann parish. During these unusual times many more parishioners have found that WeShare Online Giving has been a convenient and effective way for them to support the parish. It is an easy process to sign up for WeShare. Simply go to the parish website and click on this icon and set up your personal account.

Give Online
with WeShare

Total Contributions to the Parish last week:

Envelopes/Checks	\$4044
WeShare Online Giving	<u>\$2,706</u>
Total for Parish Operation	\$6,750
Additional Gifts: Water Pipe	\$200 (\$2,300 total)
Diocesan Collections	\$5
Mission Co-Operative	\$1,206

Grateful for your faithfulness and generosity!

**Do not conform yourselves to this age but
be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.
(Romans 12:1)**

Pray for those who are Sick in our Community

Karen B. Joanmarie Carlone Anna Carra Katie Cassling- Fishman Bruno Cirianni Frank Cirianni Mary Contino Maria Anastasia D'Amore Michael D'Angelo Dominick DeLuca Mary Felice Frank Forte	Cindy Galvacky Gambino Family Maria Rosa Gasparro Gloria Guide Bernadette Healy Victor Laggini Brianna Rose Larson Michael Lynch MaryAnn Mangiaracina Mark Marshall Giovanna Martini	Susan Maurice Wilfredo Medina III Lidia Natale Ann Navatto Victor Rangel Marie Richardson Deborah Scarpone Mary Soriano Cathy Stinziano Nathan Tarantino Joseph Tomaio Emanuel Valentin Ron Wyka
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What have you done for your marriage lately?

Most couples lead very busy lives, even during this time of sheltering at home. Jobs and family responsibilities often lead to a full calendar with not enough time to get it all done, let alone time for each other. For this reason, we've developed an alternate marriage enrichment format designed for those who are not able to commit to a weekend away.

You are invited to a virtual Worldwide Marriage Encounter Experience...

RESTORE ♥ REKINDLE ♥ RENEW

Join us from the comfort of your home via Zoom for eight evening sessions presented on **Mondays and Thursdays** from **August 31 to September 24** (due to Labor Day, one session will be on **Tuesday, September 8**).

The only requirement is a computer, iPad or tablet with access to the internet. No prior knowledge of Zoom is necessary. Workbooks and hand-outs will be sent to you before the start of the series.

Married couples, priests and religious can register for this program at aweekendforyourmarriage.org or by calling Tom and Ruth DeFalco at 732-904-9636.

A \$50 application fee covers most of the cost, however, you will be invited to make a good faith offering at the end of the program. The fee will be waived for anyone with financial strains.

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Understanding the Mass, Part I – Christ’s Sacrifice

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/understanding-mass-part-christs-sacrifice/>

This first post of a 5 part series on understanding the mass focuses on what way the Eucharist is a sacrifice, how it is a re-presentation of the once and for all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross at Calvary as well as an experience of the resurrection and the Pentecost experience of the Holy Spirit.

Even Catholics who don’t know much about their faith have some vague awareness that they’re supposed to go to Mass on Sunday, at least in normal times. Ask them to describe the Mass, though, and they might tell you that it involves an introduction, a conclusion, and a collection!

Actually, the Mass (also called the Eucharist or the Divine Liturgy) has two main parts, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But rather than analyze its parts, I’d like to examine the Mass as a whole in terms of its three principal aspects. Now and always, the Mass involves a sacrifice, the presence of Christ, and a meal.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS & CALVARY

It’s important to know what the Church means by the “sacrifice” of the Mass. The term is easily misunderstood and has caused much strife among Christians.

First of all, Church teaching reiterates what Scripture states very clearly: there is no other sacrifice except the one offered by Jesus on Calvary. Hebrews 10:12 says that Christ “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.” That sacrifice cannot be repeated. The Mass, therefore, is not a repetition; it is a re-presentation of that sacrifice.

Because Christ is a unique human being, the sacrifice He offered on the cross once and for all was a unique act. It was an act that took place at a specific moment in history and is therefore past. But Jesus is also God, who is outside of time: past and future are always present to Him. This means that the historical events of Christ’s death and resurrection are also eternal acts that can be made present by the power of the Spirit.

This is exactly what happens in the Eucharist. The power of Calvary — the sacrifice that takes away sins, heals, and transforms — becomes present and available to us. It can be applied to our need.

MASS & THE RESURRECTION

But that’s not all. The cross is incomplete without the Resurrection. You can’t understand what happened on Good Friday apart from what happened two days later on Easter Sunday. This means that the Resurrection, too, is made present every time the Eucharist is celebrated. When we go to Mass, we’re present at the foot of the cross, watching the Savior give His life for us. And we’re outside the open tomb with the risen Jesus and the women who greeted Him on that resurrection morning. “This is for you. I give My life to you,” Jesus is saying. “Receive My power.”

UNDERSTANDING THE MASS AS A NEW PENTECOST

Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice in order to bring us salvation and give us His Spirit. Pentecost is the fruit of the sacrifice of the Cross and the victory of the Resurrection. Thus, the Church teaches that every Mass is a new Pentecost, a new opportunity to receive the Spirit afresh (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 739).

To sum up, the Mass is Christ’s sacrifice made present again. It’s not recalled, as if it had been absent or were merely a past event. It’s re-presented in all its majesty and transforming power.

This article focuses on the relationship of the Eucharist to Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary. It is Part I of a Five Part Series of posts on Understanding the Mass. The series Understanding the Mass is adapted from Marcellino D’Ambrosio’s book Exploring the Catholic Church (Servant, 2001).

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Understanding the Mass, Part II – Our Sacrifice

*In Part 1 of Understanding the Mass, we examined how the Mass relates to the Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In this, **part 2** of the series, we ask in what way the Eucharist can be said to be our sacrifice, the self-offering of the Church with its head. The New Testament calls Christians “priests” and priests are those who offer sacrifice of praise & thanksgiving.*

In a very real way, the Eucharist is not only Christ’s sacrifice, but our sacrifice as well. The New Testament calls us “priests,” and priests are those who offer sacrifice. “Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:5). If there is only one sacrifice, then somehow our priesthood associates us with Christ’s act of self-offering to the Father.

SACRIFICE OF PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

The Mass is also our sacrifice in that we join our own offerings to Christ’s. First, we offer a sacrifice of praise and thanks. “Eucharist means first of all ‘thanksgiving,’” says the Catechism (par. 1360). We thank the Lord for His sacrifice, which is for us and our salvation. In the Eucharistic Prayer, a long prayer of thanks to the Father uttered toward the middle of every Mass, the celebrant speaks for us all. He thanks God for the creation of the world and for its goodness; he prays in thanksgiving for salvation history, for the whole human race is offered salvation through Jesus’ coming, death, and Resurrection.

During the Eucharistic Prayer, I always silently add in thanks for my personal blessings. I think of the natural blessings of home and work, of food on the table and the health of my family. I also thank God for my own salvation history, especially for plucking me out of danger I was heading into as a teenager — a journey that led many of my friends into drug and alcohol abuse. I thank God for bringing me together with my wife Susan, a woman who loves Him and loves me, and for having kept us faithful to Him and each other for many years. I thank Him for our own family’s salvation history.

If you haven’t already established the habit of adding your personal expressions of gratitude to the priest’s Eucharistic Prayer, try it next time you’re at Mass. It’s a very appropriate mode of participating in that part of the Eucharist.

THE MASS AS SELF-OFFERING WITH CHRIST

But our Eucharistic sacrifice involves more than offering thanks for what God has done. It means offering ourselves in response to His self-gift. Note what Paul says in his letter to the Romans: “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1).

In a way, this is what the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament symbolized. Animals were very precious to the Israelites, and only the best were considered worthy for offering to God. These unblemished, perfect, animals represented — even substituted for — the life of the person who offered them. Sacrificing them was a sign of the worshiper’s complete gift of self to the Lord.

This brings us to the collection at Mass! Believe it or not, the collection is really important. Whether we put in the widow’s mite or have the means to give much more, our financial contribution represents the gift of ourselves. As it’s brought forward at the presentation of the gifts, along with the bread and wine, our financial contribution serves as a sign of our self-offering.

GIVING & RECEIVING AT MASS

It has to be said that many of us don’t give much of ourselves in the Eucharist. As a result, we don’t receive much back. The solution is to stop being the audience and learn to be actors in the drama of the Eucharistic sacrifice, as the Second Vatican Council exhorted us: “The laity at Mass should not be silent spectators. Offering the Immaculate Victim [that is, Christ] not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves (“Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 48).

And here’s a beautiful statement on the subject from Fr. Johannes Emminghaus, a German scholar: “In the Eucharist the Church enters into this total self-giving of Christ, and we individually attempt to enter into it as fully as possible. Merely to go through the motions of the Mass without this serious and complete gift of self would simply be hypocrisy” (J. Emminghaus, *Eucharist: Essence, Form, and Celebration*, 2nd ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1978, xxi).

WATER MIXED WITH WINE, OUR OFFERING IN HIS

Offering thanks to the Lord and giving our whole selves to the Father together with Christ is what the Eucharistic sacrifice is about. Obviously, we are weak and our sacrifice is imperfect. Nevertheless, during the preparation of the gifts, we should be putting everything important to us on the altar. This includes our precious treasures of time, ambitions, desires, relationships, work accomplishments, family matters, trials, and temptations.

These are our contributions, but the sacrifice is still Christ’s. How could it be otherwise, since we died when we were baptized? “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,” says St. Paul (Gal 2:20). Anything that’s of merit or value in our lives is really Christ working through us.

Our offerings are added, then, to the personal sacrifice of Christ our head, giving us the privilege of sharing in His sacrifice to the Father. This is symbolized beautifully just before the consecration, when the priest mixes a small amount of water with the wine. The paltry sacrifice that is our life is like the water that is absorbed into the rich sacrifice of Christ, which is symbolized by the wine.

This post on the Mass or Eucharist as our sacrifice, the self-offering of Christians as priests with Christ, is Part II of a Five Part Series on Understanding the Mass.

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Understanding the Mass, Part III – Real Presence in Priest & People

This third in a series on Understanding the Mass focuses on the way the Lord Jesus is really present in his body, the church, as well as his real presence in the priest.

Whether they're Catholic or not, whether they understand it or not, most people have heard the term, "the real presence," and know it has something to do with what Catholics believe about the Mass. Indeed, the Church teaches that Christ is really present in the Eucharist — and present in at least four different ways. Today we will look at two of them.

REAL PRESENCE IN HIS BODY, THE CHURCH

First, Christ is present in the congregation. Jesus said He's there whenever two or three are gathered in His name (Mt 18:20), and usually the Sunday Mass congregation numbers more than two or three! Even when it's hard to see Christ in our fellow Mass-goers, He's really there. People may arrive distracted and preoccupied, but as they enter that church they're no longer just scattered individuals, but members of Christ's body. Whether conscious of it or not, they're being drawn together into the Body of Christ.

At Mass we deepen our communion with the whole Church, as well as with the Lord. That's what the sign of peace is about. Though sometimes viewed as a trendy idea inserted into the Mass around 1970, the sign of peace is really a recovery of a practice of the early Church. It recalls what Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift." The sign of peace is not so much intended as an opportunity for back-slapping fellowship as a sign that we hold nothing against anyone. It means we renounce all bitterness, resentment, and jealousy as we come as one body to receive the Lord together.

DISCERNING THE BODY

Often, our conscience is clear about not having committed any sins against the people in the congregation. We haven't backed into someone's car and not informed them, nor have we defamed anyone or robbed or defrauded them. But along with sins of commission, it's important to take note of our sins of omission.

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul upbraided the Corinthians for what they were failing to do. Apparently, there were rich members of the congregation who were oblivious to the needs of the poor members. They'd eat a magnificent meal while the poor sat there hungry and thirsty, and afterwards rich and poor would all come together to celebrate the Eucharist. That's seriously wrong, Paul told them. In fact, "that is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor 11:30).

"Discerning the body," as Paul put it — discerning the fact that the community is Christ's body in a very real way — is a serious matter. Christ is present in our fellow worshippers at Mass, and what we do or don't do to the least of them, we do or don't do to Christ (see Mt 25:40, 45).

THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Second, Christ is present at Mass in the person of the priest. It's not a question of whether the ordained minister is an exciting preacher or a particularly holy person. Many of our priests are in fact inspiring in holiness and powerful in their preaching. Others are not. But the good news is that Christ's presence doesn't depend on the priest's personal virtue. Christ makes Himself present through the charism that the priest has been given through ordination. This is one of the reasons that the Catholic priest wears vestments when he celebrates the Eucharist: it signifies that he's acting in the person of Christ, not in his own person.

Actually, Jesus is the only priest. Thomas Aquinas put it straightforwardly: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers" (Catechism, par. 1545). The ordained priest is an icon or image of Christ. Through him, Jesus makes His priesthood present in a very special way.

If you're happy with your parish priest, if his celebration of the Mass moves you, that's a tremendous blessing. Thank God for him! If he's less than inspiring and somehow makes it harder for you to pray, then pray for him. Priests have an awesome responsibility and a very difficult job. All of them deserve our loving support.

One of the things I love about St. Francis of Assisi is that he never took pot-shots at the clergy. In an age of widespread clerical corruption, Francis always thanked God for being able to receive the sacred Body and Blood from the hands of a priest, whether worthy or unworthy. More effectively than denunciations, Francis's loving example brought about a change in priests, calling them to greater virtue and deeper life in Christ.

This article is third in a five-part series on understanding the Mass. The entire series is adapted from the book by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Exploring the Catholic Church. This excerpt focuses on the "real presence" of Christ in the Mass based on his presence in the Church members, the body of Christ, and the ordained priest. Part four will discuss Christ's presence in the Word and the presence of his body and blood through the sacrament.

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Understanding the Mass, Part IV – His Presence in Word & Sacrament

As we have seen, the Lord Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist in at least four distinct ways. In our last article, we discussed His presence in the people and in the person of the priest. Now it is time to examine the third way He is present in the Mass, in the word of God. It's a caricature to depict the Protestant church as the church of the word and the Catholic Church as the church of the sacraments. This is certainly not the case.

The Catholic Church sees the Bible, the inspired word of God, as a priceless gift, and this is reflected in the Eucharist. In fact, the first part of the Mass centers on readings from scripture: one passage, a psalm response, sometimes another passage, and then a reading from one of the Gospels.

This Liturgy of the Word isn't an abstract catechism lesson. Through the readings, the Lord wants to speak to us personally, cutting through all our defenses and penetrating to the depths of our hearts with a nourishing, challenging word leading us to conversion. This has happened time and time again in the Church's history.

Francis Bernardone, son of a cloth merchant in Assisi, walked into church one day during a period when he was searching for meaning in life. He opened the lectionary to this text: "Go, sell what you have, give to the poor, and come, follow me" (cf. Mark 10:21). Francis knew this word wasn't just for the Apostles 1200 years earlier; it was for him, right there and then. He walked out of church, did exactly what that scripture said, and so began a world-wide spiritual revolution that still impacts us today.

My own conversion began in a similar way. I had never missed Sunday Mass except when ill, but it didn't mean a whole lot to me. I kept showing up, though, and because I was there, the Spirit suddenly one Sunday gave me ears to hear. The gospel reading — Jesus' calling Peter to come and follow him — penetrated to the depths of my being. I was so impressed that I ripped out the reading from the missalette, took it home, and put it up on my wall. I started reading Scripture, and before long my life was transformed.

This is how the Lord wants to work in our lives, and we can cooperate by cultivating openness to the word heard at Mass. It's not just at the table of the Eucharist that we're nourished. The pulpit is like a table too, as the Second Vatican Council explains: "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since from the table of both the word of God and of the body of Christ she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy" (Dei verbum, paragraph 21). We read the Scriptures first because they build up our faith. Christ is present in them, preparing us to discern the Real Presence of His Body and Blood under the signs of bread and wine.

In addition to the readings, the word of God comes to us through the prayers of Mass. Listen carefully, and you'll discover that these prayers are almost entirely scriptural. They're either direct quotes or paraphrases like the Creed, which the Church Fathers put together as a summary of the essential scriptures.

Take the greeting that the priest usually gives us when he walks in: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." That's a direct quote from St. Paul: 2 Corinthians 13:14. Or the Gloria that we pray on most Sundays: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth." That's Luke 2:14. At every Mass we sing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might." That's Isaiah 6:3, with a bit of another scripture passage thrown in toward the end. What about "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world"? That's what John the Baptist said (Jn 1:29). And then there's my favorite, that great Italian, the centurion who told the Lord he wasn't worthy to welcome him under his roof (cf. Mt 8:8); we quote him every time we pray, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you...."

The final and most special way that the Lord is present in the Eucharist is in His Body and Blood, present to us under the signs of bread and wine.

Jesus is God, and so He is omnipresent. But Jesus is man as well as God; His humanity can't be present everywhere in the same way as His divinity. Jesus' glorified humanity is at the right hand of the Father. In the Eucharist and only in the Eucharist, though, He makes His Body and Blood present to us in a totally real way. This is why the sacramental presence of Christ's Body and Blood is so extraordinary. In all of the other sacraments Jesus gives us His grace, says St. Thomas Aquinas, while in the Eucharist, the "sacrament of sacraments," He gives us His whole self, His divinity and His humanity.

How is this possible? How can Jesus be present bodily under the forms of bread and wine? Many people have the impression that it's all hocus-pocus. But the Eucharist is emphatically not magic. Rather, the transformation of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood happens the same way Mary's virginal conception did: through the power of the Word and the power of the Spirit. The incarnation may seem impossible, yet all Christians believe it. It happens the same way creation did: God spoke and the world was made out of nothing through the power of the Word and the Spirit. Likewise, in the Eucharist, the One who said "let there be light" says "this is My Body" and "this is My Blood." Through the power of the Spirit invoked upon the gifts, an awesome change takes place.

About the year 1200 or so, as some Catholics were struggling to find a way to explain this change, they came up with the word "transubstantiation." Many people struggle with this word today! One reason why we find it hard to understand is that the word "substance" has different meanings. For us, substance is something you can touch. Substance abuse, for example, has to do with tangibles like drugs and alcohol. In theology, though, substance means something that underlies what you can see and touch; it's the unchanging essence of the thing that resides under its appearances. Surface characteristics — "accidents," as theologians call them — have to do with everything that could be otherwise, be changed or altered — say, how long your hair is or how fat or thin you are.

Transubstantiation, therefore, means that while everything looks the same on the surface, the underlying essence of a thing is changed. This is just the opposite of what happens in the world we see. Usually, appearances change while the essence of a thing stays the same. In the Eucharist, though, the underlying, invisible substance is transformed from bread and wine to Christ's Body and Blood. Everything looks the same as before. Even with a microscope, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference, for the level at which this change happens is far too deep for human probing. But in the Eucharist, Christ is as truly present in His Body, Blood, soul, and divinity as when He walked the roads of Galilee, healing and preaching.

This article is part 4 of a Five Part Series on Understanding the Mass.

The Catholic Church of St. Ann

Understanding the Mass Part V – A Meal Like No Other

The bread and wine of the Eucharist actually become what they symbolize and transmit what they contain, the body and blood of Christ, for our transformation. The Mass is both sacrifice and meal at the same time.

The Eucharist is a meal. It's the Lord's Supper, as well as a holy sacrifice. It has to be both. Christ becomes present so that we can not only see Him under the appearances of bread and wine, but also receive Him into ourselves. Very tangibly, He becomes our food.

Food is very important in Christianity. I'm happy about that, because as an Italian, food is important to me! But even those of us who deeply appreciate food might wonder why the Lord chose to make Himself present in this particular way. Why bread and wine?

Bread is our basic daily nourishment. The Our Father's "give us this day our daily bread" is a petition for all our needs and necessities. The Fathers of the Church also understood it as a prayer for the spiritual nourishment we need on a daily basis — the Eucharist and the word of God.

If you want to understand the Eucharist, slowly read and pray your way through the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. That's where Jesus tells the crowd, "I am the bread of life," presenting Himself as the bread "which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (John 6:35, 33). His words connect the Eucharist with the manna that God rained down from heaven to sustain the people of Israel on their Exodus journey. Manna, too, has a deeper spiritual significance, because God provided it for more than the people's physical survival. The book of Deuteronomy says it was also to show them that "man does not live by bread alone," but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Dt 8:3). Bread, then, is the sign of our daily nourishment, both physical and spiritual.

Wine is the blood of the grape, obtainable only by crushing the grape. It symbolizes the cup of suffering, the price Jesus paid for us so that we might be free. From this cup we too must drink, if we are to be His disciples. Remember the mother of James and John who requests a favor for her sons? "Hey Jesus, can you honor them with a special place on your right and left?" she wants to know. Jesus responds by asking the two a sobering question: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" (Mark 10:28). Whatever seating assignment they end up with, He assures them, they will not escape this cup of suffering.

Wine also symbolizes the cup of joy. In both Old Testament and New Testament times, wine was associated with festivity and special celebrations. "Wine cheers gods and men" and serves to "gladden the heart of man" (Judges 9:13; Psalm 104:15). The wedding feast of Cana is a good example. By evoking suffering, wine points back to Jesus' death on the cross; by evoking joy, it points forward to the messianic banquet in heaven.

The symbol of wine — the blood of the grape that becomes the Blood of Jesus — is even richer in light of the Old Testament. There, blood is equated with life. It's not seen as sustaining life; rather, for the Jew, blood is life, and it belongs to God alone. It's for this reason that the Mosaic Law forbids drinking blood or eating any animal that still has blood in it. Even today, Jews who keep a kosher table only eat animals that have been appropriately butchered and drained of all blood.

In the Eucharist, Jesus gives us a share in God's divine life by giving us His own blood. His plan for us goes way beyond making us into decent folks who are scrubbed up and clean of gross immorality. Jesus came so that we might share in everything He has and become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

What is this divine nature? Essentially, it's the inner life of the Trinity: three Persons eternally pouring themselves out in self-giving love for each other. This is agape, or charity, and drinking Jesus' Blood gives us an opportunity to share in it. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," Jesus assures us (Jn 10:10). Let's not settle for just a tiny taste!

In order for us to stay alive, every cell in our body needs to be bathed with the blood that nourishes, cleanses, and purifies our system. Similarly, taking the Blood of Christ in Communion will bring us to full spiritual vitality. It will strengthen and cleanse our entire being — spiritually and even physically, if it be God's will.

The One we take upon our lips and into our bodies in the Eucharist is the same Jesus who raised Lazarus and healed the man born blind. Do we think about this enough? At Communion we receive Jesus, the risen Lord who will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Do we come to Him with faith that He can totally transform and heal us? When I go to Communion, I'm conscious of the spiritual sickness in my life and sometimes of physical needs, and I ask Jesus to heal and change me. I beg Him not to let me walk out of church the same person as I walked in.

In every culture I know, sharing a meal with someone is a way of expressing and deepening a relational bond. The Eucharist does this in a way no other meal can. We eat with God, He gives Himself as our food, and we're transformed into Him. When we receive Him and consume Him under these signs of bread and wine, we become Him. What intimacy! What mystery!

The Eucharist is a great deal. Consider the exchange we're invited to make. We come forward, put our humble gifts on the altar — our little sacrifices, imperfect good works, our need and brokenness — and what do we get back in return? We receive the Lord's own life, bursting with power to heal and transform us.

In the Eucharist Jesus holds absolutely nothing back from us. He gives us His entire self. May we, in the Eucharist, learn to return the favor and give Him both everything we have and everything we are.

This article is Part V of a Five Part Series on Understanding the Mass.

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