

Participation Of The Faithful At Mass

TO THE EDITOR:

There is a very important aspect of the Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass which has not been discussed in my previous letters. That aspect concerns the participation of the faithful at mass.

The mass is "the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated."

The catechism of the Catholic church, page 349. On page 344, the catechism states, "she herself (the Catholic church) is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to His (Christ's) intercession with the Father for all men.

"In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the members of His body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work are united with those of Christ and with His total offering, and so acquire a new value."

That new value being, as shared by John Cardinal O'Connor a few years back, "Joining our suffering with the crucifixion of Christ, we are contributing enormously to the salvation of the world."

Pope John Paul II, also, shares this teaching. "The Eucharist is . . . Christ's sacrifice and the Church's sacrifice . . . Christ unites the Church with His redemptive work and lets the Church share in His oblation . . . It is necessary for them to make Christ's oblation their own, offering up their pains, their difficulties, their trials, and even more, themselves, together with Him . . . By entering into the Savior's sacrificial offering, they share in the victory won by Him over the evil of the world." (Prayers and Devotions, 1984, page 235.)

Paul, the Apostle, explains otherwise in Romans 5:17-19, "For if by the transgression of the One (Adam's original sin) death reigned through the One,

much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ . . . one transgression . . . condemnation to all men . . . one act of righteousness . . . justification of life to all men . . . one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners . . . obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous."

This does not mean that all men will be saved, for the scriptures are clear that only those who trust in Jesus as their Messiah and Mediator with God will be saved. (John 3:16; I Timothy 2:5, 6; Romans 10:12-15.)

This is confirmed by Paul in this same chapter 5 of Romans in verse 1: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is nothing we can add or contribute for our salvation.

One of the hardest Biblical truths for many Catholics and others to accept is the truth that we as sinners are all under God's wrath deserving of eternal damnation. Ephesians 2:1-3: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Once a person realizes that he can do nothing to make up for his sins or the sins of others. (Romans 4:4:) "Now to the one who works his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due."

If we can never pay our dues to God even if we spend an eternity in hell, how can we do anything here on this earth? ~~He~~ can only turn to one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 11:25-30; Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 5:9, 10.) "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7.)

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