

The Anamnesis – (Part 4 of The Eucharistic Prayer) – The Holy SACRIFICE? of the Mass!

Not too long ago, one of the most popular expressions that was very commonly used to describe what Catholics would do on Sundays was not, 'We are going to Mass' or 'We are attending Church,' but rather the common Catholic expression was, "[We are going to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.](#)" Just in case you were wondering the word "Mass" comes from the Latin word *missa* (meaning mission), which refers to the mission we are sent out on after being consoled and infused with God's grace during each celebration of the Eucharist. However, the more confusing thing for most people at times was (and still is - in a sense) --- How can the Sunday Church service for Catholics be considered a Holy Sacrifice? Didn't Jesus sacrifice Himself on the Cross 2,000 years ago, and it was only one sacrifice that happened back then, right? Are you really claiming that a sacrifice is happening during every Mass, are you? The answer is yes...and yes!

This is perhaps the most important article I will write during this entire series of articles, so I'll do my best to fit it on one page (if there are enough requests, I can write something more on this topic!). After the *Epiclisis* (calling down the Holy Spirit on the gifts that are now on the altar) and the *Words of Institution/Consecration* (Jesus' very words at the Last Supper, where He becomes present through the Catholic priest and consecrates the Eucharist to become His very presence), we now come to the part of the Eucharistic Prayer called the *Anamnesis*. This long and difficult to pronounce Greek word is translated to mean, to recall or to remember. Practically speaking, when you hear the priest right after the words of Consecration (after *the mystery of faith* & response! ... we will reflect on this part next week) begin praying again, he will be mentioning Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' Ascension, and a number of other historical events that we can think about and recall the details of what happened during Jesus' time on this earth. On the other hand, this *anamnesis* or remembering **is meant to be so much more** than just a simple recollection of events. In regards to Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, during every single Catholic Mass, we are literally transported back in time to the very moment of Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and every other action Jesus' did while on this earth.

As we touched on in the reflection last week, Jesus' says at the last supper "Do this in memory of me." This remembering in a ritual format for the Jewish people is a way that they are transported back in time and in fact participate in the original miracles that God did for the Israelite people. The same is true for us now as Catholic Christians, but this time it is not just miracles that saved God's people from slavery in Egypt. This time the infinite God has become a man; the eternal God, who is outside of space and time, has, in a mysterious way, united Himself to our mortal and timebound human nature. Because of this truth, Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection can transcend time and history! God's choice of loving us, of freely choosing to suffer on the Cross, and of rising from the dead in Jesus, that resounds and transcends our concept of time as we know it. Overall, if you want to understand the depths of the mystery of the Catholic Mass, simply realize that we are being transported though time and history and are being placed at the foot of the Cross to experience that love and that grace poured out for us in Christ Jesus. The Mass is not a second, or third, or fourth sacrifice of Jesus. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass means that the ONE SACRIFICE of Jesus becomes present during each celebration of the Holy Eucharist. This is why Catholics are often so devout and serious during Mass (we can be relaxed and joyful too, but a certain devoutness is a good thing). It is the most true, somber, beautiful, difficult, real, loving, and truly awesome reality of our faith. We remember, but Jesus is truly, fully present.