

# GRICIGLIANO

The Yearly Review of Saint Philip Neri International Seminary  
Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest

THE HOLY MASS

2021

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Dear friends,

How should we assist at Mass? How can we unite ourselves more closely to the Holy Sacrifice? How ought we participate in the most solemn act of the virtue of religion, that is, the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross? These are precisely the questions that are widespread today, and the search for their answers is already a great step forward for our personal sanctification.

We do not claim, of course, to copy the pious and learned works of authors like Durand de Mende, Olier, Le Brun, Gromier, Guéranger, Schuster or any other accomplished scholars. Recently, a few authors have bravely shown the true value of this unjustly neglected subject.

However, it seemed indispensable to us to present very briefly some of the treasures contained in the Roman liturgy of the Mass; treasures that are centuries and even millennia old and which nourished and sustained our fathers in the Faith.

May the following considerations enrich your piety in worshipping our Creator in union with all the members of our Holy Mother the Church!

Please enjoy your reading!

Canon Philippe Mora  
*Rector of the Seminary*

*The Blessing of the Wheat in the Artois, Jules Breton, 1857.*



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# The Four Ends of the Mass

**T**he *Gloria* of the Mass, a magnificent hymn, first sung by the holy angels on Christmas Eve, is not simply some pious ode, but a prayer containing sound teaching and great theological precision.

The *Gloria* gives us the four ends of the Mass as taught in the catechism of Pope Saint Pius X following the Council of Trent, namely:

- **Adoration** (*Adoramus te*: a laudatory sacrifice which consists in giving God the honour due to Him);
- **Thanksgiving** (*Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam*: a Eucharistic sacrifice that thanks Him for His blessings);
- **Atonement** (*qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis*: a propitiatory sacrifice that makes satisfaction to God for our sins);
- **Petition** (*suscipe deprecationem nostram*: a sacrifice of fervent entreaty to implore new favours);

The rich prayers of the Roman Missal contain numerous references to these four ends and explain at every moment the intention of the Church and the priest in the accomplishment of the sacrifice.

## Adoration

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Praise acknowledges the reasons to honour God and, together with the recognition of our absolute dependence on His majesty, constitutes worship.

Incense best represents this cult of worship due to God (cult of *latria*). It burns and rises towards the divine majesty, as described in the heavenly liturgy of the Apocalypse.

*May the Lord receive this sacrifice from thy hands, to the praise and glory of His Name, for our own benefit and that of all His Holy Church.*

*Suscipiat, response to the Orate fratres*

At the *Orate fratres*, a prayer of invitation before the beginning of the Canon, the ministers respond by joining their intentions to that of the celebrant to accomplish the sacrifice *ad laudem et gloriam nominis [Dei]*.

The Preface and the *Sanctus* are an opportunity for all of the Church Militant to join in praise and adoration with the nine heavenly choirs of angels: *et ideo cum Angelis et Archangelis, ... cum quibus et nostras voces una voce dicentes*. Our voices thus united proclaim the praise and majesty of the thrice Holy God. The first part of the *Sanctus* is the song of the angels, as told by the prophet Isaiah (Is 6, 3)



*The Foundation Mass of the Trinitarian Order,*  
Juan Carreño de Miranda, 1666.

and Saint John in the Apocalypse (Ap 4, 8); the second part is the song of men at the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday; Mt 21, 19).

The posture of the priest and ministers, who bow while reciting the *Sanctus*, is also one of adoration, and in a way imitates the posture of the angels who cover their faces with their wings (Is 6, 2), as Durand de Mende notes. It is also remarkable that the *Sanctus*, a song of praise taken from Jewish liturgy, was implemented throughout the Church as early as the second century, under Pope Saint Sixtus I.

*At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and in hell, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.*

*Philippians 2, 10-11*

The sacred rite of the Elevation has become the iconic symbol of worship for the faithful who participate kneeling (Phil 2, 10-11). It was introduced in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in France in response to those who denied the presence of Our Lord immediately after the consecration of the bread.

Until the celebrant consumes the Sacred Species entirely (“The principal sacrifice in the Old Law was the holocaust, which implied that the victim was completely consumed in honour of God,” Saint Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I<sup>a</sup> II<sup>ae</sup> q. 102, art. 3; cf. Lv 2, 13), the general attitude of adoration remains, as seen by the genuflections that the priest performs every time he touches the Sacred Host or uncovers the chalice containing the Precious Blood.

The bells that ring at the Elevation are a reminder of the silver trumpets (still in use at the Papal Mass) which in the Old Testament bore witness of a divine manifestation (Ex 19 for example) or announced to the people the time to gather together, especially for adoring the Lord (Num 10).

After the *Ite Missa est* (or *Benedicamus Domino* if the *Gloria* was not sung), the priest recites the *Placeat*, a prayer that acts as a final summary of his intentions. This prayer, previously placed after the blessing before Pope Saint Pius V, is kept even when the blessing is omitted at Requiem Masses. It bears witness to the creature’s homage to its Creator: *obsequium servitutis meae*.

This homage was perfectly achieved through the act of adoration of Our Lord at His Incarnation, as evoked in the Last Gospel of Saint John: *Et Verbum caro*

*factum est, et habitavit in nobis, et vidimus gloriam eius – And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory.*

## Thanksgiving

“Man was created to know, serve and love God, to offer all of creation in this world in thanksgiving back to Him and to be raised up to life with Him in heaven.” (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 67*)

We give thanks to God for the glory that He possesses from all eternity, but also for the glory associated with His wondrous works, such as Creation, the Incarnation, our Redemption and all of their consequences, i.e. the preservation of the world, the

*Vouchsafe to look upon these sacrificial offerings with a gracious and tranquil countenance, and to accept them, even as Thou wast pleased to accept the offerings of Thy just servant, Abel, and the sacrifice of Abraham, our patriarch, and that which Melchisedech, Thy high priest, offered up to Thee, a holy sacrifice, a victim without blemish.*

*prayer Supra quæ after the Consecration*

*Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas, ac venerabiles manus suas: et elevatis oculis in celum ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem, tibi gratias agens, benedixit, fregit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite, et manducate ex hoc omnes.*

Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and having lifted up His eyes to heaven, to Thee, God, His almighty Father, **giving thanks to Thee**, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take ye and eat ye all of this.

*Simili modo... item tibi gratias agens...*

In like manner... **again giving thanks to Thee...**

institution of the Sacraments, and the guidance of the Church.

From this point of view, the Sacrifice of the Mass is the most perfect act of thanksgiving that a creature can offer to God, since it renews the act of thanksgiving made by Christ Himself, as shown by the prayer *Qui pridie* that the priest recites just before the Consecration.

The Eucharistic character of this sacrifice was foreshadowed by the sacrifice of Melchisedech,

as recalled in the prayer *Supra quæ*, pronounced shortly after the consecration. Melchisedech, the “Priest of the Most High” (Gn 14, 18), offered bread and wine in thanksgiving to God at Abraham’s request after a great victory. “Likened unto the Son of God”

(Hb 7, 1-6), his sacrifice prefigured the Eucharist in matter and intention of thanksgiving, as well as in the act itself, although very imperfectly, as the Psalms attribute to the Messiah the title of “Priest according to the order of Melchisedech” (Ps 109, 4 and Mt 22, 42, where Our Lord claims that He fulfils the promises of this Psalm).

Throughout the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the intention to give God thanks is continuously present, for example the responses of *Deo gratias* (after the Epistle and the Last Gospel) or at the beginning of the Preface, *Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro. Vere, dignum et justum est, æquum et salutare nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere...*

## Atonement

Another end of the Mass is to satisfy the anger of God for our offences, that is to say, to have our sins forgiven and to be reconciled with Him. Through His bloody sacrifice on the Cross, Christ obtained satisfaction for all of our sins, which is the only complete and just satisfaction for them, and through the non-bloody renewal of this sacrifice, Christ obtains for us the remission of our sins provided we are properly disposed for it (Council of Trent, session XXII, canons 2 and 3).

Immediately after the prayers at the foot of the altar, which contain a clear confession of our faults (*mea maxima culpa*) and the ardent desire to be forgiven (*Indulgentiam, absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum nostrorum tribuat nobis omnipotens et misericors Dominus*), the celebrant recites the prayers *Aufer a nobis* and *Oramus te* that express his personal unworthiness before “entering the Holy of Holies”. This sense of unworthiness is repeated by the celebrant in several prayers: “*Munda cor meum ac labia mea— Purify my heart and my lips,*” before he reads the Gospel; “*Ego indignus famulus tuus— I, Thine unworthy servant,*” when he offers the bread; “*Domine non sum dignus— Lord, I am not worthy*” before Communion; “*Sacrificium quod oculis tuae majestatis indignus obtuli— The sacrifice which I, all unworthy, have offered up in the sight of Thy Majesty*” and before the final blessing. There are also bodily movements made by the priest that express this

*Cleanse my heart and my lips,  
O almighty God, Who didst cleanse  
with a burning coal the lips of the  
prophet Isaias, and vouchsafe in Thy  
loving kindness so to purify me that I  
may be enabled worthily to announce  
Thy holy Gospel.*

*prayer Munda cor*



*The Meeting of Abraham and Melchisedech,  
Laurent de La Hyre, circa 1630.*

sentiment, such as when he bows deeply or when he strikes his breast.

The humility and unworthiness that the priest publicly declares are necessary foundations for offering this sacrifice to God; likewise, the souls of others can be made pleasing to God through the power of the Mass, provided they recognize their own weakness. This intention is expressed by the faithful in the prayer *Orate fratres*: “*Ad utilitatem quoque nostram totiusque*

*Ecclesiae suae sanctae— For our own benefit, and for that of all His Holy Church.*”

“*Offerimus tibi, Domine, calicem salutaris, tuam deprecantes clementiam— We offer unto Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching Thy*

*clemency.*” The celebrant recites this prayer at the Offertory when he offers the wine for the

*Aufer a nobis, quæsumus, Domine, iniquitates nostras: ut ad Sancta sanctorum puris mereamur mentibus introire.*

Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord; that being made pure in heart we may be worthy to enter the Holy of Holies.

*Oramus te, Domine, per merita sanctorum tuorum, quorum reliquie hic sunt, et omnium sanctorum: ut indulgere digneris omnia peccata mea.*

We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of those of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to pardon me all my sins.

sacrifice that will save us and allow us to enter into eternal life. The *Hanc igitur*, which is one of the last prayers said by the priest before the Consecration, clearly mentions this character of atonement: “Dispose our days in Thy peace; command that we be saved from eternal damnation and numbered among the flock of Thine elect.” The very gesture of extending his hands over the bread and wine to be consecrated reminds us of the gesture made by the High Priest once a year, on the Day of Atonement, when he laid his hands on a scapegoat, symbolically charging it with the sins of the people.

The remission of sins (*in remissionem peccatorum*), is explicitly reported by Saint Matthew in the account of the Institution of the Eucharist (Mt 26, 28), thus underlining the atoning character of the sacrifice at its most solemn moment.

Attending the Sacrifice of the Mass can even allow a person in a state of mortal sin to obtain

present or future graces for his personal conversion and final perseverance. Participating at the Sacred Mysteries therefore does not necessarily imply receiving the Eucharist, although it is strongly recommended for those in a state of grace. This is because sacramental Communion does not confer the forgiveness of mortal sin, like Penance or Baptism; rather it requires the union of charity (I Cor 11, 27-29).

## Petition

“*Memento mei dum veneris in regnum tuum – Remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.*” (Lk 23, 42) These magnificent words that the Good Thief addressed to Our Lord while they were hanging on their crosses side by side is repeated on two occasions during the Mass: before and after the Consecration. The favours that can be obtained through the Mass provide us with opportunities to ask for specific graces for the Church Militant, for individuals, and for those assisting at the Mass either physically or spiritually through the union of their intentions to the Holy Sacrifice.

These graces, which may also include material needs, are requested foremost for the salvation of souls: *suprema lex salus animarum*. After the Consecration, the priest then prays for the souls in Purgatory (the Church Penitent) during the *Memento* of the dead.

Bossuet explains remarkably why we ask for the intercession of the Church Triumphant.

“You may have noticed that when we pray to God, we pray through Jesus Christ, not only that the prayers made by the saints in heaven be fulfilled, but also for our own inspiration and desire to pray for

*These graces, which may also include material needs, are requested foremost for the salvation of souls: **suprema lex salus animarum.***



them. Those who openly mock the Canon may be ignorant or rash enough to also mock this manner in which we directly ask the Lord to send His holy inspirations to the saints to pray for us; they wonder if it were not faster to ask God from the start what we want from Him instead of inspiring His saints to pray for us.

But according to this worldly logic, all prayers would become useless, both those addressed directly to God, and those through the saints. Does God not already know what we need? Does He somehow not know what we desire unless we pray to Him? And did He Himself not cause the inspiration in us to pray to Him?

The correct response here is that God, regardless of how He knows all these things, wills all the same that we pray to Him for ourselves and for our neighbour, and that we beseech others to pray to God for us, because, even though He has no need of our prayers, neither to fulfil our requests, nor to know what we are asking, praying in this way makes us better Christians. This method should not be called useless, for it is rather a sincere and charitable practice that God always honours every time He inspires or hears these prayers. And because He desires perfect fellowship among those whom He blesses, whether in heaven or on earth, He wills that, not only the faithful, but also the angels and saints in heaven to pray for us, because it is one type of perfection for the saints in heaven to care about the eternal

*You may have noticed that when we pray to God, we pray through Jesus Christ, not only that the prayers made by the saints in heaven be fulfilled, but also for our own inspiration and desire to pray for them.*

*Bossuet*



*The Virgin Mary and Other Saints Interceding for the Souls in Purgatory, Philippe de Champaigne.*

salvation of their fellow man, and another type for the angels in heaven, who are not human, to love and admire in us the human nature which the Son of God loved to the point of uniting Himself to it in His Person.

Therefore let us beseech the Lord to inspire His angels and saints to make these prayers which honour Him, because we can ask Him through any means He likes to manifest His glory; but we must always ask Him through Jesus Christ, through whom alone all good must come to us.”

(Explanation of some difficulties on the Mass, n° 39)

# Solemnity of the Rites and Rubrics

“**T**he Church is heaven on earth, where the God of heaven dwells and moves.” This famous definition made by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Germanus I, also applies to the Latin liturgy, which, throughout its development and history, has always remained symbolically the same as the liturgy in the Apocalypse (cf. *Heaven on Earth*, Fr Claude Barthe).

*And he will show you a large furnished dining room, and there prepare.*

*Luke 22, 12*

Though offered by men, the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary at Mass remains essentially an act performed by Christ.

As such, great respect is due to all the teachings concerning the Mass that have been passed down through Sacred Scripture and Tradition, especially with regard to the principal phrases and gestures of the liturgy; these have come directly from Christ or the Apostles, or, to be more precise, from Christ through the Apostles, who taught their disciples what they learned from Him during the three years they accompanied Him. Our Lord Himself was also very attentive to Jewish prescriptions; the Institution of the Eucharist took place in a “large and furnished room” (Lk 22, 12).

*Careful respect for these rubrics has nothing to do with narrow and dry formalities.*

Careful respect for these rubrics, which are often centuries old, or even millennia, as some had already been established in the Old Testament, has nothing to do with narrow and dry formalities. God blessed the patriarch Abraham for his faithfulness in performing the sacred ceremonies in the Old Testament (Gn 26, 4-5).



*Pontifical Crowning of the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe in 1895, P. Carrasco, S.J., circa 1900.*

These ceremonial rubrics, in contrast with hollow, dry words and gestures in other ceremonies, are a real source of inspiration for those present, who are uplifted and elevated by them through their rich symbolism and history.

While the liturgy is destined for God, our five external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) are employed and stimulated by these liturgical rubrics as well, which direct everything from the visual decorations of the

*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my precepts and commandments, and observed my ceremonies and laws.*

*Genesis 26, 4-5*

church to the motions and gestures of the celebrant or the faithful, as well as the Gregorian chant of the Mass.

This established order, this majestic structure, has recently been belittled because it is too often misunderstood. A solemn conduct and all that surrounds it, underline the importance of that which participants witness.

Certainly, this worship is above all spiritual (Jn 4, 23 and Ps 50, 17-18) and the faithful who participate at the Holy Mass, that is to say, at the sacrifice of Christ, must seek firstly a spiritual and interior union. But the outward radiance bears witness to the greatness of the interior side of worship of the faithful and to the greatness of God to whom the sacrifice is offered, while at the same time performing a pastoral role in helping to uplift the weaker members of the faithful to contemplate heaven

*That which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops.*

*Matthew 10, 27*

**“The Catholic Church alone is beautiful.**

You would see what I mean if you went into a foreign cathedral, or even into one of the Catholic churches in our large towns. The celebrant, deacon, and subdeacon, acolytes with lights, the incense, and the chanting – all combine to one end, one act of worship. **You feel it is really a worshipping; every sense, eyes, ears, smell, are made to know that worship is going on.** The laity on the floor saying their beads, or making their devotions; the choir singing out the *Kyrie*. And the priest and his assistants bowing low, and saying the *Confiteor* to each other. This is worshipping, and it is far above reason.”

Saint John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain*.

through their external senses by the celestial beauty of the liturgy.

Essentially, this is a truly Christian announcement of triumph, as described in Mt 10, 27, which is proclaimed for the good of the faithful. As Fr Berto said:

“Triumphalism! We abhor this abject and foolish slogan, and we accuse those who, in 1963, soiled our language with this savage and barbaric term. They are truly impious, they

have contempt for the poor, they commit forgery and fraud. They are impious, because, however powerless their rage may be, they strive to blame and scorn the practices from which thousands of pious souls have for centuries drawn their consolation and their courage; they have contempt for the poor, because these so-called theologians, formed in certain

groups and associations, deprive the poor of the Roman religious beauty, which surpasses all others and which animates all others, and condemn them to a hideous, dismal, bleak, meaningless and petty religion; they commit forgery because they lie in claiming that ‘the modern man’—as if they alone lived in the twentieth century—can no longer stand what they like to call ‘the splendour of Renaissance’; they commit fraud, because this clan takes advantage of the ‘pure gospel’ to use the least evangelical means of force, intimidation, intoxication, politics, money, and even the complicity of the proven enemies of the Christian name to impose its forgery.”

The exterior solemnity is firstly directed to

*There were a great number of lamps in the upper chamber where we were assembled.*

*Acts 20, 8*

our sense of sight, which the liturgy touches first. In this respect, the appearance and architecture of the church, “*Domus Dei et porta caeli - House of God and gate of heaven*”, as the Mass of Dedication says (cf. Gen 28, 17), are very important to dispose the soul to reflection. The eye is then drawn to the interior decorations, which face east, waiting for the glorious return of Christ. The prayer of the faithful is united to that of the priest, the mediator, and together they turn to the Lord (*Habemus ad Dominum*).

The lighting, whether natural or artificial, also plays an important role (Acts 20, 8). From the first centuries, and even during the early persecutions of the Church,

Pontifical High Mass of priestly ordinations for the Institute: the solemn and exact order of these ceremonies sets the standard by which the rites of all other forms of Mass are to be celebrated.



our fathers in the faith made great efforts to decorate dark areas like the catacombs as much as they could. We still have frescoes and mosaics from this period.

The iconoclastic heresy that agitated the Church at the end of the first millennium has made it possible to underline and highlight the consequences of the Incarnation. Representing Our Lord Jesus Christ can be done without contravening the prohibitions of the Old Testament (Ex 20, 4; Dt 5, 8) for Our Lord Himself assumed a physical body. In this way, the human body and all its senses can now take a greater place in spiritual worship. The search

for what is beautiful has become central and all Christian art derives from this necessary solemnity of the rituals.

In churches where it is possible, this search for beauty finds a particular echo during the solemn celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. All the senses of the participants can flourish here: the sight of the majestic vestments, the rank of the ministers and the structure of the ceremonies, the smell of the incense, the sound of the Gregorian chant, and so on. But it is above all the whole person that is enriched by this external splendour, and who can rise through this beauty to the contemplation of the Sovereign Good.

“A ritual expresses the union of the Church’s prayer and action in a form that transcends history. **It is a concrete expression of the link between the liturgy and the Church, which keeps the Deposit of the Faith handed down through Apostolic Tradition.** This link of the Church can have different forms, or even developments, but absolutely never anything arbitrary...”

The tragic aspect of Luther’s attempts to reform the liturgy is that they took place at a time when people largely misunderstood its nature and relationship with the Deposit of the Faith. Luther advocated a return to *sola scriptura* as the supreme authority in the Faith, but he did so without rejecting the professions of faith made by the early Christians, creating the interior tension that lies at the root of the fundamental problem of the Reformation.

**The Reformation would certainly have taken a different course had Luther known how the great liturgical traditions of the Church expressed the Faith and the**

**existence of the mysteries of salvation and personal salvation.**

The radical approach of the historical-critical method has shown that the principle of *sola scriptura* cannot serve as a basis for the Church nor for the celebration of Faith. **Scripture comes to life only within the Church.** To reconstruct the liturgy based on *sola scriptura*, by combining Sacred Scripture with prevailing exegetical opinions, as some people today are attempting, is absurd. It confuses faith and opinion. **It amounts to making a liturgy built on the sand of human discussion – a liturgy that sounds hollow, no matter what art decorates it.** Only respect for the primacy of Faith in the liturgy, excluding anything arbitrary, can offer us what we desire, namely a celebration where ‘the sublime’ comes to us, not of our own doing, but out of a free and unmerited gift.”

Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.

# Gregorian Chant, a School of Holiness

**A**t the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Saint Pius X undertook great efforts to restore Gregorian chant.

In wanting to restore the chant of Saint Gregory to its native purity, and to bring it back to its honourable place in the holy liturgy, he had foremost a spiritual restoration in mind. To his mind, Gregorian chant is not merely an accessory that flatters the ear and makes liturgical ceremonies pleasant, but rather it is a powerful instrument of divine grace, which establishes souls in peace, piety and recollection, which reveals to the hearts of

*Gregorian chant establishes souls in peace, piety and recollection, which reveals to the hearts of the faithful the depths of God's love, and calls them to an ever-higher degree of holiness.*

the faithful the depths of God's love, and calls them to an ever-higher degree of holiness.

Gregorian chant can be legitimately called a channel of sanctification, and this is for two reasons. Gregorian chant is holy and sanctifying by its role in the divine liturgy, but it is also holy and sanctifying itself by its own qualities. Indeed, it is perfectly attuned to the Christian life; it lives by the same principles and dies from the same enemies as the life of grace in souls.

The qualities that distinguish Gregorian from all other musical genres are precisely those which divine grace produces in the Christian soul: primacy of the interior life, the spirit of prayer, peace and praise centred entirely on God, the desire and search for perfection, forgetting one's own self. Conversely, the things that ruin Gregorian chant are the influences of the worldly spirit which corrupt supernatural life: the desire to stand out, negligence, rashness, an attitude of independence or competition, attention to one's own feelings to the detriment of the primary object – God in His eternal glory, His immortal truth, His omnipresent charity.

Before it is made into music, Gregorian chant is first a sort of commentary on the sacred words of the liturgy, which should lead souls to contemplate that which words are insufficient to express. For this reason, Gregorian

“Sacred music should possess to the highest degree the qualities proper to the liturgy, in particular, **sanctity and goodness of form**, which will spontaneously produce the final quality of **universality**... **These qualities are found, in the highest degree, in Gregorian chant.** Consequently, this is the song that is proper to the Roman Church, the only song She has inherited from the ancient Fathers, the only song She has jealously guarded for centuries in Her liturgical books, the only song She directly proposes to the faithful as Her own, the only song She prescribes exclusively for some parts of the liturgy.”

Motu proprio *Tra le sollecitudini* by Pope Saint Pius X on the restoration of sacred music, 22 November 1903.



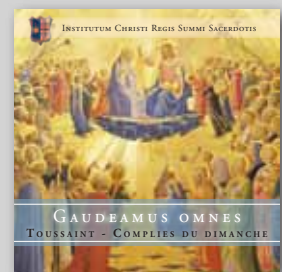
*The Schola of Red Clerics, Giannone Nicolò.*

chant is something delicate, and care must be taken to ensure that its performance does not contradict its meaning and sterilize its work of sanctification. “Watch and pray” is the rule of Gregorian chant, the law of Christian life.

With this spirit, the seminarians are formed in Gregorian chant at Gricigliano, in the tradition of the Abbey of Solesmes. Our duty as Canons of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest is not only to be men of the altar, but also to give priority every day to the Divine Office. Every day at the seminary, the Offices of Lauds, Sext, Vespers and Compline are sung. Through this routine of daily praise, the heavenly court is glorified in this special way and our community life is strengthened. We always strive to appreciate more and more the splendour of Gregorian melodies, and to better develop our bonds of charity and unity

when we sing in choir, which is an image of the choir of angels singing in heaven for the greater glory of God.

Since 1999, the seminarians at Gricigliano have regularly sung and recorded CDs of Gregorian chant. Seven albums have been published, with the latest addition of the Mass of All Saints’ Day and Sunday Compline. To purchase them, please contact the seminary.



# The Rite of Holy Communion

Receiving the Body of Christ, the most sacred of beings, the holiest and most beloved Person in the universe, humbly present in the Host, requires a deep faith, a pure heart, and unequivocal gestures of adoration. The rite of receiving Holy Communion kneeling and on the tongue best corresponds to these holy requirements, which is why the Catholic faithful of all times have practised it exclusively, from the first Christians, to the contemporaries of the Church Fathers, to our parents and grandparents.

**K**nown as a zealous defender of the traditional rite to receive Holy Communion, His Excellency Bishop Athanasius Schneider traces the origin of this practice back to the very institution of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. *Accipite et manducate* (Mt 26, 26) Our Lord said to His Apostles on the evening of Holy Thursday. “The word *accipite*, given in all of the Greek texts by the word *lambanein*, does not mean *touch with the hand*, but the act of receiving. *Accipere* is also found in the following passages: *The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive* (Jn 14, 17); *Receive the Holy*

*Ghost* (Jn 20, 22), etc. In the case of Holy Communion, the word *accipite* does not mean, ‘*Take with your hand*’ outwardly, but rather it means, ‘*Receive the Sacrament of the Eucharistic with your heart, with your soul and, of course, with your body, but in a proper way, with deep spiritual reverence, kneeling and on the tongue.*’” (*Corpus Christi*, Bishop Athanasius Schneider)

In the very first centuries of Christianity, however, the rite of Holy Communion had a different form: the Consecrated Bread was first placed in the palm of the right hand of the faithful, or on a white veil, called a *dominical*, which covered the hand of women; the faithful then bowed deeply to receive Holy Communion directly with their tongue without ever touching the consecrated bread with their fingers. It was therefore communion on the tongue. In addition, the faithful would also consume any particles of the host with their tongue that might have remained on their palm to ensure that none fell to the ground.

The Holy Ghost, however, never ceases to instruct the Church. He gave Her a deeper knowledge of the truth hidden in the mystery of the Eucharistic and suggested ever more perfect expressions of adoration for the Body of Christ, to the point that in the sixth century, in the Church of Rome, the Sacred Host

*Communion of the Apostles*, Luca Signorelli, circa 1512.





was distributed directly on the tongue, as Pope Saint Gregory the Great testifies in the third book of his *Dialogues*. From the eighth century onwards, the custom of distributing the Host directly on the tongue of the faithful became widespread in all the Churches of the East and West. Then in the Middle Ages, the faithful expressed their adoration even more clearly by systematically receiving the Blessed Sacrament while on their knees, as a gesture of both interior and exterior respect, as Saint Thomas Aquinas exhorts us in the sequence *Lauda Sion* of the Mass for *Corpus Christi*: “Dare to praise Christ as much as you can.”

The traditional rite of Holy Communion is not limited to mere outward signs of reverence, but also has deep spiritual significance. Christ Himself, in the person of the priest, nourishes the faithful and reminds them that without a sincere attitude of humility and spiritual childlike dependence on the greatness of God present in the Sacred Host, they will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. His Excellency Bishop Schneider illustrates this point: “Is it not stated in the Holy Scripture, ‘Like newborn infants, desire the spiritual milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation, *if you have tasted that the Lord is sweet?*’ (I Pt 2, 2-3) This spiritual milk is essentially Christ Himself and, in a special way, Christ in the Eucharist. Infants receive milk from their mother only with their mouth. An adult, on the other hand, brings food to his mouth with his hands. Jesus did not say, ‘Unless you change and become adults,’ (Mt 18, 3) but quite the contrary!”

*Christ Himself, in the person of the priest, nourishes the faithful. Without an attitude of childlike dependence on the greatness of God present in the Sacred Host, they will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven.*



Benedict XVI distributing Holy Communion

Communion received kneeling on the tongue has given abundant spiritual fruit to the faithful for more than a millennium. Even today, the spiritual progress of each member of the Church, and ultimately the true renewal of the whole Church, depends precisely on respect and devotion rendered to the Sacrament of the Altar. Our Lord, present under the Eucharistic species at the moment of the distribution of Communion, is “the smallest, most fragile and most helpless being in the Church”, and it is only to the extent that He is visibly venerated and loved that He will abundantly bestow His countless graces to the Christian people who call on Him.

# The Posture of the Priest and the Faithful during Mass

The celebrant and the faithful make many different bodily movements and stances during Mass: the Sign of the Cross, kneeling, sitting, standing, bowing, etc. Here are some gestures and postures employed during the Holy Sacrifice. All of them contain rich corporal and spiritual meanings and are based on theological and scriptural foundations.

**T**he Sign of the Cross, accompanied by the Trinitarian invocation, is one of the most fundamental gestures of Christian prayer. When recited with Holy Water, it reminds us of our Baptism and allows us to express outwardly our faith in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ crucified. It is also a profession of hope, as it calls upon the divine protection of the Holy Ghost and the gift of fortitude for us in times of tribulation. Finally, it is a renewed invitation to imitate Our Lord, especially in the mystery of His Passion, directed entirely to our resurrection with Him in glory. Through the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, the graces of our redemption have been spread in superabundance over the whole human race. Therefore, the Sign of the Cross naturally became the universal ges-

ture for blessing among Christians when we invoke God to bless people or objects.

During the Canon of the Mass, the priest makes a total of twenty-five Signs of the Cross on the Eucharistic species, either when he indicates what is to be blessed before the Consecration, or after to indicate the source of all blessings.

Kneeling is a liturgical gesture of the highest order, having in itself a deep spiritual meaning. Because of the unity of our body and soul, the spiritual act of adoration, which concerns the whole human person, must necessarily be expressed by a corporal gesture, such as kneeling or even prostration. It already appears, on numerous occasions, in the biblical accounts of the Old Testament. Joshua, for example, fell to the ground and prostrated himself before

The deacon chants the Gospel during a Pontifical High Mass at the seminary of Gricigliano



the prince of the host of the Lord who appears to him before the taking of Jericho (Jg 5, 14), because in this mysterious man who prefigures Christ, he recognized the Lord. Even more eloquently, Our Lord Himself in the Garden of Olives, having knelt down, according to Saint Luke (22, 41), and falling on His face, as Saint Matthew adds (26, 39), He prayed to His Father. Finally, Saint Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, gave his definitive theological foundation for why we kneel; because Jesus Christ humbled Himself and made Himself obedient unto death, God exalted Him and gave Him a Name which is above all names, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth and in hell (2, 8-10). From these considerations, it is clear that kneeling is undeniably the most suitable posture for adoring and receiving the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in which God is truly and substantially present.

Sitting, more profane in itself, nevertheless has a role during Mass, such as during the Epistle, the Gradual, the Tract or the Alleluia verse, and during the sermon. In general, it favours meditation and relaxes the body, so that nothing hinders our listening and attention. Listening attentively to the divine teachings of Our Lord prepares us to put them into practice. In the Gospel, we read that this is the position of Our Lord when He taught: *He sat teaching* (Lk 5, 17 – this is why the bishop, speaking as the Magisterium of the Church, preaches while sitting); the crowd that listened to Him was sitting: *And the multitude sat about Him... And looking round about on them who sat about Him, He saith: Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of*

*God, he is My brother, and My sister, and mother.* (Mk 3, 32-34)

Standing is a sign of joy and victory for Christians, who associate themselves with the Risen Lord through their corporal position. A typical position for prayer in the Old Testament, standing was still practised by the Jews at the time of Our Lord. For Christians, it became the position of prayer during Paschal Time, as seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Council of Nicaea, which actually forbade kneeling and prescribed standing during this season. This position expresses our veneration, but also our determination to keep the Word of God and to follow the example and teachings of Christ, which is why we stand at the Gospel during Mass.

Bowing is another symbolic gesture within the liturgy of the Mass. For example, the priest, while standing, bows profoundly while reciting one of the prayers in the Canon which begins with the words, *“Supplices te rogamus—Humbled before Thee, we beseech Thee.”* Once again, the body and soul correspond. Like the publican in the Gospel, the priest, conscious of his own unworthiness, bows before the face of God as he intercedes for the Christian people, so that the Lord may deign to look upon them with His benevolence, accept the sacrifice and in return bestow upon them His blessings. These profound bows are in a way the corporal expression of humility, or lowliness, in imitation of the Son of God, who, through His Incarnation, became a humble servant who bowed before us for our redemption.

*God hath exalted Him and hath given Him a Name which is above all names, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and in hell.*

*Philippians 2, 9-10*

# The Symbolism of Incense

## *In Odorem Suavitatis*

**T**he house was filled with the odour of the ointment (Jn 12, 3). In imitation of Saint Mary Magdalene, as Our Lord said we would (Mt 26, 13, “*That which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her*”), the Church brings forth Her perfumes symbolically to honour Our Lord during the Holy Sacrifice.

Burning incense in honour of gods was very common in ancient times, both among pagans and the Jews. At the time of the Jewish priesthood, even before the Incarnation, God accepted this sort of offering in the Temple as good and honourable, and we can see how at that moment, the Angel Gabriel came and spoke to Zachary (Lk 1, 9-11 and Ex 30).

*And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God.*

*Apocalypse 8, 3*

*Ab illo benedicaris in cujus honore cremaberis—May thou be blessed by Him in Whose honour thou art to be burnt.* Blessed by these words, the incense becomes an efficient instrument to drive away demons (prefigured in Tob 6, 8). However, it is not blessed when incensing the Blessed Sacrament, such as at the Elevation or during Adoration, because the Real Presence of Our Lord replaces all other blessings.

Incense also has deep symbolic meanings which Holy Scripture never fails to use. For example, the Wise Men offered Our Lord incense reserved for God just a few days after His birth in the manger (Mt 2, 11). This incense also symbolizes the gift that Jesus made of His own person to the Father from His birth: “*When He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not... Then I said: Behold I come.*” (Hb 10, 5-7)

*Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectu tuo—Let my prayer be directed*



*The celebrant incenses the bread and wine at the Offertory of Mass*

ted as incense in thy sight (Ps 141 [140], 2). The meaning of these words from the Psalms, which the priest recites when he incenses the cross on the altar at the Offertory, corresponds to two passages from the book of Apocalypse: “The ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them ... golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Ap 5, 8); “And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the hand of the angel.” (Ap 8, 3-4)

Incense is therefore an outward sign of our spiritual sacrifice, but also of the prayers that please God like an odour of sweetness. Incense also symbolizes sacrificial prayer: the humanity



of Jesus Christ consumed in His sacrifice is the only prayer that is pleasing to the Father *de condigno*; the prayers of the saints are united to this mediation of Christ like grains of incense placed on the burning coals that represent charity. This is why the priest, when he returns the thurible to the deacon, says, “*Accendat in nobis Dominus ignem sui amoris, et flammam æternæ caritatis—May the Lord enkindle in us the fire of His love and the flame of everlasting charity.*”

### *Prayers of incensing at the Offertory*

*Per intercessionem beati Michaelis Archangeli, stantis a dextris altaris incensi, et omnium electorum suorum, incensum istud dignetur Dominus bene ✠ dicere, et in odorem suavitatis accipere. Per Christum, Dominum nostrum. Amen.*

*Incensum istud a te benedictum ascendat ad te, Domine: et descendat super nos misericordia tua.*

*Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea, sicut incensum, in conspectu tuo: elevatio manuum mearum sacrificium vespertinum. Pone, Domine, custodiam ori meo, et ostium circumstantiæ labiis meis: ut non declinet cor meum in verba malitiæ, ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis (Ps. 140, 2-4).*

By the intercession of blessed Michael the archangel, who standeth at the right hand of the altar of incense, and of all His elect, may the Lord vouchsafe to bless ✠ this incense, and to receive it for an odour of sweetness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May this incense, blessed by Thee, O Lord, ascend to Thee, and may Thy mercy descend upon us.

Let my prayer be directed, O Lord, as incense in Thy sight: the lifting of my hands as an evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: and a door round about my lips: that my heart may not incline to evil words: to make excuses in sins (Ps 140, 2-4).

# Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Mass of Corpus Christi

*Corpus Christi*, celebrated the Thursday following Trinity Sunday, was instituted for the glory of the mystery at the heart of Mass: the Holy Eucharist. The texts for the Mass and Divine Office for this feast were composed by Saint Thomas Aquinas, a secondary patron saint of the Institute. To this day, they remain unmatched in their beauty and theological insight.

The feast of Corpus Christi was introduced relatively late in the Roman liturgy. An Augustinian nun from Liège, Saint Juliana, had received visions from Our Lord asking her to create a feast like this. She complied and became the first to obtain its introduction in 1246 in her diocese of origin. Later, Jacques Pantaléon, Archdeacon of Liège, who was elected pope in 1261 under the name Urban IV, decided to officially institute this feast for the entire Church by the papal bull *Transiturus de Hoc Mundo* on 11 August 1264. The Holy Father, in order to compose an Office and Mass in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, engaged the help of a number of scholars, including Saint Thomas and Saint Bonaventure, both of whom were already quite renowned.

When the writings were finished, there was no lack of praise for the work of Saint Thomas. It is even said that Saint Bonaventure, after

reading a single page of Saint Thomas's work, immediately took his own manuscript—while undeniably a masterpiece—and burned it himself. Saint Bonaventure later explained, “I do not want on my conscience the thought that I tried to come between the world and this.” The famous seventeenth-century Latin poet Jean-Baptiste de Santeul, himself a composer of sacred hymns, admitted that he would have sacrificed all his works to become the author of a single stanza of the hymn from Lauds *Verbum Supernum*.

The texts of the Mass and the Office, in the form of musical poetry, combine the precise theological teachings of the Church on numerous subjects about the Eucharist, such as the Real Presence, the nature of Christ's sacrificial offering in the Mass and Holy Communion. The antiphon at Second Vespers, for example, gives a perfect summary of the four effects of

*Corpus Christi procession at Gricigliano*



the Blessed Sacrament: “*O Sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria Passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia et futura gloria nobis pignus datur—O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory to us is given.*”

All members of the Institute recite this beautiful antiphon daily.

Another example of the theological teaching by Saint Thomas is in the three prayers that the priest recites during this Mass, which explain the triple meaning of the Blessed Sacrament. Looking to the past, the Collect expresses how this Sacrament is the memorial of the Passion of the Lord, which was a true sacrifice; “*Deus, qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti: tribue quæsumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari; ut redemptionis tuae fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus—O God, who in this wonderful sacrament has left us a memorial of Thy passion; grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy body and blood, that we may ever feel within us the fruit of Thy redemption.*” Turning to the present reality, the Secret asserts how the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not only a commemorative symbol, but also an effective sign of unity and peace in the Church; “*Of Thy goodness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, grant to Thy Church the gifts of unity and peace which are mystically represented under the gifts we offer.*” Finally, the Postcommunion awaits the future, showing that the Eucharist prefigures the joy with God in our true homeland; “*Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to be filled with the everlasting enjoyment of Thy divinity, which the temporal partaking of Thy*

*Sing, my tongue, the mystery of the Glorious Body and Precious Blood that the King of nations, the son of a noble woman, has shed for the redemption of the world.*



*Saint Thomas Aquinas Submitting His Office of Corpus Christi to Pope Urban IV, Taddeo di Bartolo, circa 1403.*

*precious body and blood doth foreshow.*”

When Saint Thomas heard his brothers singing for the first time the Office that he had written and composed, he began to weep with love and gratitude to Our Lord Who had inspired him with such a wonderful Office. Perhaps God gave him at that moment a glimpse of the glorious future that the new feast would have. Perhaps He showed him in an instant the millions of processions that would be held around the world in streets, cities, hills, valleys and cloisters. Perhaps he saw the Vicar of Christ blessing with the Sacred Host the hundreds of thousands of faithful gathered in Saint Peter’s Square, after singing that hymn whose first words resound beyond the centuries: *Pange Lingua, gloriosi, Corporis mysterium, Sanguinisque pretiosi, Quem in mundi pretium, Fructus ventris generosi Rex effudit gentium.*

Whether he knew it or not, Saint Thomas had written a hymn by which the Bride of Christ would glorify Her Divine Spouse hidden within the greatest of Sacraments.

# Saint Francis de Sales and Assisting at Mass

During Lent in 1604, when Saint Francis de Sales was preaching in Dijon, his manner of receiving Holy Communion from the hands of Monsignor Frémyot on Holy Thursday profoundly edified all who were present. His sister, Madame Frémyot de Chantal, said the following: “He knelt down at the bottom of the steps, and brought himself in this position to the place in the middle of the altar and received Holy Communion with such devotion that all who witnessed him could not fight back their tears. His whole head seemed to radiate, especially at the moment when young Monsignor Frémyot, his heart swelling and tears in his eyes, placed the Sacred Host on the tongue of the holy bishop.” Let us remember the example and the precious teachings of him whom the Church has proclaimed to be *The Doctor of Divine Love*.

**I**n the second part of *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, “containing various advice for the elevation of the soul to God through prayer and Sacraments”, Saint Francis de Sales dedicates the fourteenth chapter to the Holy Mass with instruction on how to attend it.

The Eucharistic devotion of this holy bishop has received universal praise; “I have said nothing concerning the Sun of all spiritual exercises, even the Most Holy, Sacred and Sovereign Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist—the very centre point of our Christian religion, the heart of all devotion, the soul of piety; – that Ineffable Mystery which embraces the whole depth of Divine Love, by which God, giving Himself really to us, conveys all His graces and favours to men with royal magnificence.”

After this introduction, the saint then insists on the benefits of Holy Mass for the Christian soul; “Prayer made in union with this Divine Sacrifice has untold power; through which, indeed, the soul overflows with heavenly grace, and leaning

on her Beloved, becomes so filled with spiritual sweetness and perfume, that we may ask in the words of the Canticles: ‘Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?’”

Saint Francis then recommends daily assistance at Mass, inviting us to raise our eyes of Faith to the heavenly splendours which happen before us; “Strive then to your utmost to be present every day at this Holy Celebration, in order that with the priest you may offer the Sacrifice of your Redeemer on behalf of yourself and the whole Church to God the Father.

*Strive to your utmost  
to be present every day  
at Holy Mass*

Saint John Chrysostom says that the Angels crowd around it in adoration, and if we are found together with them, united in one intention, we cannot but be most favourably influenced by such society. Moreover, all the

heavenly choirs of the Church Triumphant, as well as those of the Church Militant, are joined to our Dear Lord in this divine act, so that with Him, in Him, and by Him, they may win



the favour of God the Father, and obtain His Mercy for us.” If daily assistance were impossible, he instructs us on how spiritual communion would nevertheless foster our sincere Eucharistic piety: “If any imperative hindrance prevents your presence at this Sovereign Sacrifice of Christ’s True Presence, at least be sure to take part in it spiritually. If you cannot go to Church, choose some morning hour in which to unite your intention to that of the whole Christian world, and make the same interior acts of devotion wherever you are that you would make if you were really present at the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Church.”

Finally, he makes a few recommendations that everyone can use to draw spiritual nourishment from Mass; “In order to participate at Mass properly whether actually or mentally, you must give heed to several things:

**1. At the beginning, and before the priest goes up to the Altar,** make your preparation with his—placing yourself in God’s Presence, confessing your unworthiness, and asking forgiveness.

**2. From when the priest ascends the altar until the Gospel,** dwell simply and generally upon the Coming and the Life of our Lord in this world.

**3. From the Gospel to the end of the Creed,** dwell upon our Dear Lord’s teaching, and renew your resolution to live and die in the Faith of the Holy Catholic Church.

**4. From the Creed to the *Pater Noster*,** fix your heart on the mysteries of the Word, and unite yourself to the death and passion of our Redeemer, now actually and essentially set forth in this Holy Sacrifice, which, together with the priest and all the congregation, you offer to God the Father, to His Glory and your own salvation.

**5. From the *Pater Noster* to the moment of Communion,** offer all the longings and desires



*Saint Francis de Sales at the Feet of the Virgin Mary,  
Monastery of the Visitation in Bourg-en-Bresse.*

of your heart, above all desiring most earnestly to be united for ever to our Saviour by His Eternal Love.

**6. From the moment of Communion to the end,** thank His Gracious Majesty for His Incarnation, His life, death, passion, and the love which He sets forth in this Holy Sacrifice, beseeching through it His favour for yourself, your relatives and friends, and the whole Church; and humbling yourself sincerely, devoutly receive the blessing which our Dear Lord gives you through the channel of His minister.

If, however, you wish to follow your daily course of meditation on special mysteries during the Sacrifice, it is not necessary that you should interrupt yourself by making these several acts but it will suffice that at the beginning you dispose your intention to worship and to offer the Holy Sacrifice in your meditation and prayer, since every meditation includes all the above-named acts either explicitly or implicitly.”

# The Mass of Saint Padre Pio

In October 1955, Father Jean Derobert met Padre Pio when he was a student in Rome on a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. On 3 October 1955, before they parted, the great spiritual director, Padre Pio, did him the honour of choosing him as his spiritual son. He then experienced throughout his life the special spiritual assistance that the famous Capuchin monk had promised him. As a privileged confidant of the saintly priest, he presented, in numerous conferences, some accounts on how Saint Pio of Pietrelcina lived by the mysteries of the Holy Mass.

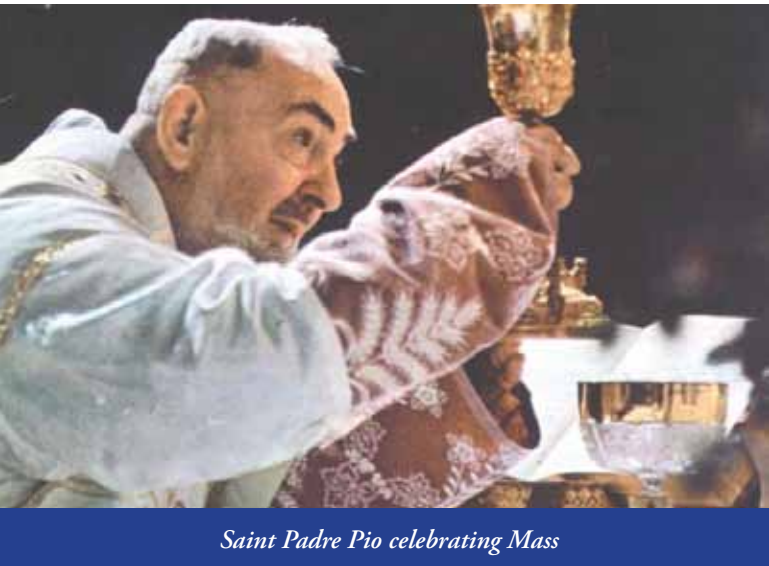
One might say that he was the model for every priest. It was impossible to witness his Mass without participating in the dramatic scene that happened every morning at the altar. Crucified with Christ

Crucified, Padre Pio relived the Passion of Our Lord with true sorrow that I have tearfully witnessed. I was privileged to have served his Mass. Father taught us that our salvation could only be obtained if, before all else, the Cross was rooted in our lives. He said, “I believe that the Holy Eucharist is a great means of aspiring to holy perfection, but we must receive it with the desire and the commitment to remove from our hearts everything that displeases the One we want to have in us.” (27 July 1917).

He also explained that when the priest celebrates the Holy Sacrifice, the chronology of the Mass and the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ is aligned. First, we must know and understand that the priest at the altar *is* Jesus Christ, not someone who represents Him. Then we must see that Our Lord, in His priest, relives His same Passion indefinitely at every Mass: from the initial Sign of the Cross to the Offertory, we must join Jesus in Gethsemane, following Him in His agony, suffering before this ocean of sin, this *black sea* of those who refuse God. We must join Him in His pain to see that the Word of the Father, which He brought to us, would not be received, or would be so poorly received by men. We must therefore apply ourselves to listening attentively to the readings of the Mass as if they were addressed to us personally.

## *Important dates of the life of Saint Pio de Pietrelcina*

- **25 May 1887**, Francesco Forgione is born in a modest home in Pietrelcina, in southern Italy.
- **1903**, at sixteen years old, he entered the novitiate with the Capuchin friars and made his solemn vows on **27 January 1909**.
- **10 August 1910**, he was ordained priest.
- **4 September 1916**, he moved to the convent San Giovanni Rotondo, in the Gargano Mountains, where he remained until his death
- **20 September 1918**, he received the stigmata visibly in his hands, his feet and in his side.
- **5 May 1956**, he inaugurated the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza*, a hospital house founded by the saint.
- **23 September 1968**, he died at 81 years old.



The moment of the Offertory is the moment of His arrest. Behold His time has come...

The Preface is the song of praise and thanksgiving that Our Lord Jesus Christ addresses to His Father, for He has enabled Him to finally come to this hour.

From the beginning of the Canon to the Consecration, the priest accompanies the Divine Master in His imprisonment, His atrocious scourging, His crowning of thorns and His Way of the Cross through the streets of Jerusalem. At the *Memento*, Christ beholds all those who are present and those for whom the priest prays in a special way.

The Consecration gives us the Body that is now given up, and the Blood that is now shed. Mystically, this is the time of the Crucifixion of Our Lord. At that moment during Mass, Padre Pio had excruciating pains, even feeling the pain of the nails attaching Jesus to the Cross. The prayer that immediately follows the Consecration then makes us join Jesus hanging on the Cross and offering to His Father His Redeeming Sacrifice in that moment.

*First, we must know and understand that the priest at the altar is Jesus Christ, not someone who represents Him.*

The words, “Through Him, with Him and in Him,” corresponds to the cry of Jesus, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!” From then on, the sacrifice is complete and accepted by the Father; men are no longer separated from God and are united in His single Mystical Body. This is why, immediately after, the priest recites the prayer of all the children of God, the “Our Father”.

The fraction of the host signifies the death of Our Lord on the Cross.

The Intinction, the moment when the priest drops a piece of the Body of Christ into the chalice that contains the Precious Blood, signifies Christ’s Resurrection because His Body and Blood are once again united and we go to the living Christ for Communion.

At the end, the Final Blessing marks the faithful with the Sign of the Cross to distinguish and protect them against the assaults of the devil.

This was the explanation heard from the very mouth of Padre Pio, who personally experienced all this.

On Monday, 23 September 1968, at two o’clock in the morning, Padre Pio was in the armchair of his cell, wearing his Capuchin habit, clutching his rosary between his fingers and softly whispering the names of Jesus and Mary; he very well may have added *Ite, missa est!* Thus ended the living Mass of the man of God who had offered himself as a victim during his entire life.

Padre Pio invites us to put the Mass at the centre of our lives, uniting ourselves to the Divine Victim through Faith and Charity, and fulfilling this union through Holy Communion.

# The Most Holy Virgin Mary and Holy Mass

The Ordinary of the Mass mentions Our Lady at only four instances: At the *Confiteor*, to entreat her merciful prayers as the Refuge of Sinners and the Mother of Mercy; at the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* (Offertory) and the *Communicantes* (Canon), to give her the honour she deserves as Mother of God and Queen of Angels and Saints; and at the *Libera nos* (after the *Pater Noster*), to ask for her intercession as Queen of Peace. Following Cardinal Philippe (*The Blessed Virgin and the Priesthood*), we can go further to become fully aware of the place that Mary occupies at Mass, remembering that the Sacrifice of the Altar is the renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

As Saint John tells us, “*There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother.*” (Jn 19, 25) Since the priest continues and renews the Priesthood of Christ in his sacrificial act, Mary’s union with the sacrifice of her son must also continue and be renewed. Would there not be something missing from Mass without her? Could it still be a perfect representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross?

For this reason, as he prepares himself for the celebration of Mass, the priest asks the Blessed

Virgin Mary, “Even as thou did stand beside thy dear Son as He hung upon the Cross, so wilt thou also stand by me, a poor sinner, and by all the priests who are offering Mass today throughout the entire church, so that, by thy grace, we may offer a worthy and acceptable sacrifice.” (*Missale Romanum, oratio ad Beatam Mariam Virginem ante Missam*) Because Jesus willed her presence to be necessary on Calvary, every priest therefore also truly needs her holy presence at every Mass in an invisible but very

powerful way for their frail human hearts. The priest can therefore share in the feelings between Our Crucified Lord and His mother Mary; he makes Christ’s love for Mary his own and he enjoys Mary’s love for Christ present within himself. Finally, but most importantly, he takes through the priesthood the offering of the Co-Redemptrix uniting herself with the Redeemer in the supreme act of sacrifice.

Mary’s participation at Mass is also important because we can only offer to God what rightly belongs to

*Proclamation of the Immaculate Conception, Francesco Podesti.*



us; Jesus belongs to us only because He freely gave Himself to us; “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep.” (John 10, 11) But Mary has a real right over her Son whose Sacrifice cost her the terrible suffering in her Seven Sorrows. Conscious of this, the priest, in his thanksgiving after Mass, presents the Divine Victim to the Blessed Virgin, “to offer to the Holy Trinity as our supreme act of worship for

*Even as thou did stand beside thy dear Son as He hung upon the Cross, so wilt thou also stand by me, a poor sinner, and by all the priests who are offering Mass today throughout the entire church, so that, by thy grace, we may offer a worthy and acceptable sacrifice.*

thy honour and glory and for my good and the good of all the world”. (*Missale Romanum, oratio ad Beatam Mariam Virginem post Missam*)

At the moment of Communion, the priest has a special need of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who can teach him best how to unite himself with the Holy Victim of Calvary, in conformity with the Host of his sacrifice.

This is the moment when, for him, these stanzas from the *Stabat Mater* take on their full meaning: “O Mother, source of love, may I bear Christ’s death, embrace His Passion, be wounded by His wounds and inebriated by the Cross and the Blood of your Son...”

Undoubtedly, this communion with the Passion of Christ, this inebriation with the horror of the Cross, this wound in his heart, is all strictly speaking the work of Jesus in him through the Sacramental Grace of his priesthood and the Holy Communion he received. But all this comes to him through Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces. In order for him to live his Mass as a crucified priest, he needs the prayers and presence of the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of Compassion.

This union with the Blessed Virgin will bring him to an ever-higher degree of zeal for the beauty and dignity of the liturgy. As Benedict XVI wrote, “Mary is the *Tota pulchra*, the all-beautiful, for in her the radiance of God’s glory shines forth. The beauty of the heavenly liturgy, which must be reflected in our own assemblies, is faithfully mirrored in her.” (Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 96)



*Descent from the Cross, Charles Le Brun, 1684.*

# Preparing for Communion

**A**fter the celebrant gives the *Pax* (or recites the corresponding prayer), he recites two prayers in a low voice, bowing humbly, to prepare himself for Holy Communion.

These are first personal prayers of the priest, addressed to Jesus Christ himself, that differ from the other prayers of the Mass through which the priest offers the sacrifice to the Father through the Son (*per Christum Dominum nostrum*).

Nevertheless, these prayers have great spiritual value for his immediate preparation for Communion; in his book *The Mass Explained*

*The Church has given us prayers that are perfectly measured for our state and needs and express the true dispositions which we must have to receive Holy Communion.*

*Domine Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi, qui ex voluntate Patris, cooperante Spiritu Sancto, per mortem tuam mundum vivificasti: libera me per hoc sacrosanctum Corpus et Sanguinem tuum ab omnibus iniquitatibus meis, et universis malis: et fac me tuis semper inhaerere mandatis, et a te numquam separari permittas: Qui cum eodem Deo Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas Deus in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

*Perceptio Corporis tui, Domine Jesu Christe, quod ego indignus sumere praesumo, non mihi proveniat in iudicium et condemnationem: sed pro tua pietate prosit mihi ad tutamentum mentis et corporis, et ad medelam percipiendam: Qui vivis et regnas cum Deo Patre in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Who, according to the will of the Father, through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world: **deliver me by this Thy most Sacred Body and Blood from all my iniquities, and from every evil; make me always cleave to Thy commandments, and never suffer me to be separated from Thee,** Who with the same God, the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

Let not the partaking of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, all unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but through Thy loving kindness, **may it be to me a safeguard and remedy for soul and body;** Who, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen

for the Faithful, Father Joly writes, “The faithful who wish to approach the holy table, or to make a spiritual communion, can use these

*We can ask God for all the signs that He wishes to manifest His glory, but we must ask through Jesus Christ, through whom alone all good things must come to us.*

prayers to prepare themselves the evening before for the following day. These are certainly preferred to other formulas which contain unnecessarily multiplied actions, or prayers which invoke our feelings, or promises to make which are not suitable for the present state of our soul. The Church has given us prayers that do not have these defects because they are perfectly measured for our current state and needs, and express the true dispositions which we must have to receive Holy Communion.”

It is important to remember that the Sacraments have a double effect: the first is produced through the power of the Sacrament itself (*ex opere operato*) while the second depends on the variable dispositions of each recipient (*ex opere operantis*) and which is therefore capable of

*Let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*

*1 Cor 11, 28-29*



*The Last Communion of Saint Jerome, Domenico Zamieri, 1614.*

producing more or less grace in proportion to the ardour of charity and immediate preparation found in each individual.

When we fervently pray for the grace to never be separated from God, or to receive Holy Communion as a remedy for all our imperfections and sins (assuming that we still receive Communion in a state of grace, according to I Cor 11, 28-29) there can be no doubt that Our Lord will grant us these graces through the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist.

# Fioretti about Mass

The Holy Mass summarizes all of God's love for us; it is like a compendium of all the benefits that the Lord has bestowed on men.

*Saint Bonaventure*



Great is the favour God did us by assuming a human nature; no less great, it seems, is the favour He does us by descending every day on the altar.

*Saint Bonaventure*



*The Mass of Saint Gregory the Great,  
Adriaen Isenbrandt, 1550.*

When you attend Mass, do not see a priest, but rather see Jesus Christ whose hand is invisibly stretched out over the bread and wine.

*Saint John Chrysostom*



Of all the favours granted to men, this is the greatest; it was truly from His most generous impulse of love that God instituted this mystery without which there could be no salvation for the world.

*Saint Odo, abbot of Cluny*



The Eucharist is the end and consummation of all the other Sacraments.

*Saint Denis*



What wonderful dignity of priests! In their hands, as in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God is incarnated!

*Saint Augustine*



It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than without Holy Mass.

*Saint Padre Pio*



A single Mass offered for us during our life is worth more than a thousand celebrated for us after our death.

*Saint Anselm of Canterbury*



The best way to save time is to lose half an hour each day to assist at Holy Mass.

*Blessed Frédéric Ozanam*



When Mass is being celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the Divine Victim immolated on the altar.

*Saint John Chrysostom*



The food of the soul is the body and blood of a god. If you reflect on it, you could lose yourself forever in the abyss of love!

*Saint John-Marie Vianney*



One can merit more by devoutly attending a Mass than by distributing all one's goods to the poor and making a pilgrimage around the world.

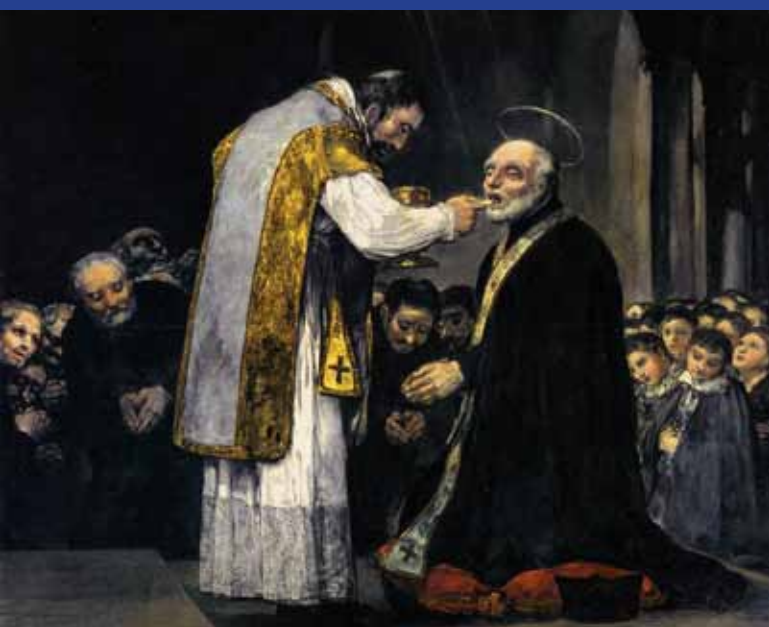
*Saint Bernard*



When I immersed myself in prayer and united myself to all the Masses that were being celebrated all over the world at that moment, I implored God to have mercy on the world and especially on the poor sinners who would die at that moment. At that same moment, God answered me interiorly that a thousand souls had received His grace because of my prayer. We do not know by how many souls are entrusted to us to be saved through our prayers and sacrifices, so let us always pray for sinners.

*Saint Faustina Kowalska*

*The Last Communion of Saint Joseph Calasanz,*  
Francisco de Goya, 1819.



*The Mass of Saint Basil,* Pierre Subleyras, 1746.

Holy and Eternal Father, let us make an exchange. You hold the soul of my friend who is in Purgatory, and I hold the Body of Your Son Who is between my hands; deliver my friend, and I will offer You Your Son with all the merits of His Death and Passion.

*Saint John-Marie Vianney*



With a single Mass, the priest honours God more than all the angels and saints in heaven have honoured Him and will ever honour Him, even the Blessed Virgin Mary; for all together they cannot worship Him in the same infinite way as the priest does when he celebrates at the altar.

*Saint Alphonsus Liguori*

# Postface

by Msgr Gilles Wach

When Charlemagne asked Alcuin about the meaning and nature of the divine liturgy, the scholar replied, “The liturgy is the joy of God.”

When Our Lord ascended to the glory of heaven at the end of His earthly mission, the Apostles faithfully remembered His works and teachings. As commanded, they were careful to integrate the mysteries of the life of Our Saviour into the holy liturgy; this allowed the first Christians to remain in His presence, “persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts, 2, 42)

If Baptism purifies our soul from Original Sin, our incorporation into Christ also has an effect: it renders us *capax Dei*. This baptismal character therefore gives us the duty—or the right, as we would say today—to pay homage and adoration to God; in this sense, it could be called a delegation similar to the consecration of sacred vessels. This makes it impossible for a baptized person to find true happiness outside this perspective, for only the joy of God can fill the human heart and consume it with its infinite love. Unfortunately, this truth is largely unknown in our modern society, which, sometimes without knowing it, lives in complete ignorance of the first three Commandments of its Creator: “You shall have only one God,” “You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain,” “You shall sanctify the Lord’s day.” If these precepts are neglected, is it possible to observe the following seven relating to our neighbour, even if we have just and humane morals?

Never before has the Divine Law been so viciously attacked as it is today, such as the recent challenges on the Magisterium during the pontificate of Pope Saint John Paul II. People talk of change, progress and revolution in morals in order to “adapt” with these times that claim to have something new... Morality is inseparable from Faith because it is an outpouring of God’s

love in the hearts of men and a transfiguration of action through the truth. The great scourge of our times is that the Good News of salvation has not been presented with the radiance it deserves as the joyful and solemn proclamation of the triumph of Our Lord over sin. In other words, our Faith lacks attention to the sacred liturgy and its abundance of ceremonies, symbols, vestments, gestures and chants that are mystical extensions of the Incarnation, all of which sustain, illustrate, and nourish our Faith. As Saint Prosper of Aquitaine wrote, in a formula that has become a true proverb, “The law of praying establishes the law of believing”, *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

The venerable Pope Pius XII wrote last century, “The mystery of the most Holy Eucharist which Christ, the High Priest instituted, and which He commands to be continually renewed in the Church by His ministers, is the culmination and centre, as it were, of the Christian religion.” (*Mediator Dei*, 20 November 1947) As the supreme testimony of our Faith, the Holy Mass deserves all possible veneration! Here, our soul can draw graces from the open Heart of our Redeemer as from a pure spring, to become more attentive, faithful and devoted to Him.

To defend the moral law, we must necessarily rediscover our Faith; however, no faith can exist without worship. Therefore, the most efficient remedy is to contemplate the Roman liturgy, which continues to shower upon us so many graces and brings forth so many vocations. This same liturgy delighted the heart of one of the Church’s great reformers, Saint Teresa of Avila. She exclaimed, “I remain impressed by the splendour of the Church’s ceremonies!”

Let us pray to heaven that those who govern us may be enlightened so that they may better understand that one can not teach morality without Faith, nor can one know and live by Faith without a majestic and splendid liturgy.

S. THOMAS  
AQUINAS

**E**cce panis Angelórum,  
*Behold the Bread of Angels,*

Factus cibus viatórum:

*made the food for pilgrims:*

Vere panis filiórum,

*Truly it is the bread of children,*

Non mitténdus cánibus.

*not to be thrown to dogs.*

In figúris præsignátur,

*Before it was signified by figures.*

Cum Isaac immolátur:

*It was with Isaac immolated:*

Agnus paschæ deputátur

*it was signified by the Pascal lamb,*

Datur manna pátribus.

*and in the Manna given to our fathers.*

Bone pastor, panis vere,

*Good Shepherd, true bread,*

Jesu, nostri miserére:

*Jesus, have mercy on us:*

Tu nos pasce, nos tuére:

*feed us, protect us:*

Tu nos bona fac vidére

*make us to see the supreme good*

In terra vivéntium.

*in the land of the living.*

Tu, qui cuncta scis et vales:

*You, who know all and can do all things,*

Qui nos pascis hic mortáles:

*You who nourish us here in our mortal state,*

Tuos ibi commensáles,

*grant, after having partaken of this food on Earth,*

Cohærédes et sodáles,

*to make us coheirs and compatriots*

Fac sanctórum cívium.

*of the inhabitants of the heavenly city.*

Amen. Allelúia.

*Above, detail of the facade of the Church of Christ the King,  
constructed by the Institute, in Libreville.*

*Cover, Papal Mass celebrated by Pope Saint John XXIII in  
Saint Peter's Basilica.*





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