

Liturgical Year Supplemental Lesson

Lent and Easter

Correlated Materials

Student Text: Chapter 5, p. 36;
Chapter 9, pp. 55–58; Chapter 22,
pp. 115–18

LESSON FOCUS

Through the liturgical year, we walk with Christ. During Lent and Easter, we celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Lent is a time of offering sacrifices in order that we may share in his sufferings. Easter is a time of celebrating the joy of the Resurrection.

AIMS

- Students will understand that by participating in the liturgical year they will walk with Christ and participate in his joys and sufferings.
- Students are reminded that the Paschal Mystery includes the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the highlight of our celebration of the Paschal Mystery takes place during Holy Week.
- Students will learn that during Lent we are called to make sacrifices, and during Easter we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection.

Begin the Lesson

Preparation (5–10 minutes)

Use one or more of the following resources for prayer and student preparation for the lesson.

SCRIPTURE: Student Text, p. 115

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant” (Hebrews 9:14–15).

Jesus freely offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for our redemption. Through the blood of Christ’s sacrifice we are purified. Jesus is the mediator. No longer are we bound by our sins; rather, we can become new by the New Covenant of love in Christ Jesus.

SACRED ART: Student Text, p. 115

The Descent from the Cross (detail), Rembrandt

Gaze upon the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which opened the gates of heaven. Through his suffering and death, we receive new life.

PRAYER WITH CHILDREN: Act of Love, Student Text, p. 176

Proclamation (1 minute)

(Proclaim slowly, then repeat.)

During Lent and Easter, we celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. The Paschal Mystery refers to the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which we are saved from our sins.

MATERIALS

- Chalkboard/dry erase board
- Bibles
- Copies of timeline on Appendix p. A-40
- Copies of liturgical year chart (Appendix pp. B-41–B-42)

WORDS TO KNOW

Paschal Mystery: refers to the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus by which we are saved from our sins. The term comes from the Hebrew word for “Passover,” a feast Jews celebrated in remembrance of their liberation from Egypt. The Last Supper was a Passover meal Jesus celebrated with his Apostles.

The Passover Feast

The Pharaoh and the Egyptians worshipped many gods, and they did not believe in the one true God. God sent ten plagues to show that he was the one true God and because the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave Egypt. The tenth plague was the killing of all of the firstborn. God required his people to do the following in order to save their firstborn: sacrifice an unblemished lamb, take the blood of the lamb and place it over the doorpost with a hyssop branch, celebrate with a feast, and eat the lamb. As a result, the angel of death would “pass over” those homes where the doorpost was sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. The Paschal lamb was the lamb that was sacrificed so that the firstborn would live.

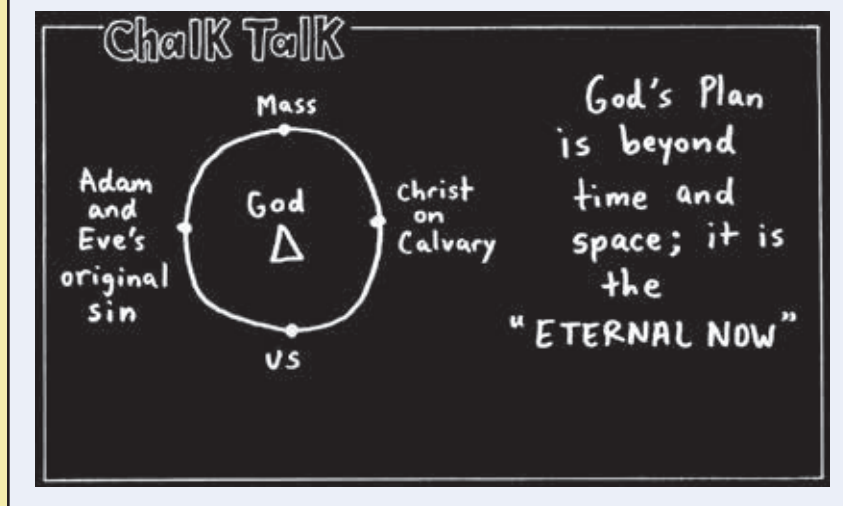
Lesson Explanation (25–35 minutes)

Explain focus points in your own words or use the discussion points and questions.

Focus 1: Pasch—Jewish Feast of Passover

- **Use** the Appendix timeline to help students connect the first Passover with the Last Supper and the Mass.
 - **Point out** the bottom shaded blue area that connects the Passover with the Last Supper and the Eucharist; give a brief overview:
 - The first Passover occurred in Egypt more than 1000 years before Christ. This feast is celebrated every year. Jesus was celebrating the Passover feast the night before he died; this was the first Mass. The Passover refers to the Paschal Mystery (Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ). By participating in the Paschal Mystery, we suffer with Christ and also receive new life.
 - **Ask** students if they can re-tell the Passover story. See sidebar.
- The first Passover prefigures the Last Supper when Jesus, the Lamb of God, took away the sins of the world. (See sidebar on p. 304.)
 - Let’s look at the similarities of the first Passover and the Last Supper. (Write two columns on board:)
 - **First Passover:**
 - A lamb was sacrificed. (Paschal lamb)
 - The lamb was unblemished.
 - Blood of the lamb was sprinkled over the doorpost.
 - The first Passover delivered the Israelites from slavery to Egyptians.
 - They had to eat the lamb.
 - **Last Supper:**
 - Jesus, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed.
 - Jesus was without sin and had no broken bones, just like the unblemished lamb.
 - The blood of Jesus was shed.
 - Jesus’ sacrifice delivered us from our slavery to sin.
 - The Apostles ate the Body and Blood of Christ.
 - ***Do you think that it is possible that the past events of the Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection can become present to us in the Mass? (Answers will vary; see next page. See Chalk Talk.)***
 - During the Mass, the past events of the Last Supper become present.

CHALK TALK: BEYOND SPACE AND TIME



- God exists outside of time, and he is not limited by time. Therefore, when Jesus entered into time the past events of his life can become present for all of us throughout time.
- Because the past events of Jesus' life become present to us at Mass and through our participation in the Mass, we participate in the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.
- Through the transformation of the Passover to a new Passover at the Last Supper, Jesus gives us the gift of himself.
 - At the Last Supper, Jesus consecrated the bread and wine so that he will always be present to us through Holy Communion.
 - The words of Consecration are "This is my Body, which will be given up for you. This is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."
 - At Mass, through the power of the Holy Spirit, during the prayers of Consecration, the bread and wine are changed into Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.
 - The substance changes, though the appearance remains the same. This change in substance is called transubstantiation. (See Chalk Talk: Transubstantiation on next page.)
 - *When we receive the Eucharist, we are "in communion" with Jesus; how can we become as present to him as he is to us? (Answers will vary; be completely aware of Jesus' presence, be grateful, prayerful, etc.)*

Conclusion: The Passover feast prefigured the Mass. Just as the unblemished lamb was sacrificed to free the Israelites from slavery, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was offered to free us from the bondage of sin. Through our participation in the Mass, we participate in the sacrifice of Christ.

FOCUS | OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- See Application.

CHALK TALK: TRANSUBSTANTIATION



Passover Parallels with the Paschal Mystery

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| John 1:29 | • John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God. |
| Mark 14:22–25 | • Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, and Jesus referred to his Blood as "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." This relates to Exodus 24:8: "Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." As he said this, Moses threw the blood of the sacrificed animals on the people (see Matthew 27:25). |
| John 19:13–14 | • Pilate condemns Jesus on "the day of preparation ... about the sixth hour." The sixth hour of the day of preparation is when the Passover lambs were sacrificed. |
| John 19:28–30 | • The soldiers give Jesus vinegar to drink, which is soaked in a sponge that is placed on the end of a hyssop stick. According to Exodus 12:22, the Israelites were to use a hyssop stick to mark their doors with the blood of the Passover lamb. |
| John 19:33 | • The soldiers did not break any of Jesus' bones. According to Exodus 12:46, the Israelites were not to break any bone of the Passover lamb. |

Focus 2: The Paschal Mystery. We participate in the Paschal Mystery in the Holy Mass. Through this participation, we offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God and receive the new life of the Resurrection.

- The **Paschal Mystery** is the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.
 - Through the Paschal Mystery we are saved from our sins.
 - **What events of the Paschal Mystery are made present in the Mass?** (*Last Supper, Crucifixion, Resurrection.*)
 - **The Last Supper:** During the words of Consecration spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus.
 - **The Crucifixion** (Jesus' sacrifice and death on the Cross at Calvary): Through the priest, Jesus is offering himself for our sins. This very sacrifice is made present on the altar at Mass in an unbloody manner.
 - **The Resurrection:** During the Eucharistic Prayer and other prayers of the Mass, the Resurrection becomes present. Through the power of Jesus' Resurrection, we receive new life.
- **Sacrifice:** A sacrifice was necessary at the first Passover. Jesus transformed the first Passover to a new Passover. The sacrifice of Jesus' life was necessary to redeem mankind, just as the sacrifice of the first Passover was necessary for the firstborn to live. Our participation in this sacrifice is necessary for us to receive the new life within us.
 - **At the time of the Passover, what was necessary for the Israelite firstborn to be saved?** (*An unblemished lamb had to be sacrificed.*)
 - **What sacrifice was necessary for Jesus Christ to give us eternal life?** (*Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, had to be sacrificed on the Cross.*)
 - **What kind of sacrifices should we offer in order to receive new life in us?**
 - Our participation in the Mass.
 - Giving ourselves to God.
 - Making small sacrifices for God and for others.
- **New Life:**
 - **What blessing did the Israelites receive after the first Passover?** (*They were delivered from slavery in Egypt; the firstborn were able to live.*)
 - **What blessing did we receive three days after Jesus died on the Cross?** (*The Resurrection, which gave us hope for new life.*)
 - Jesus received new life in the Resurrection. We too can receive new life.

FOCUS 2 OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- See Application.

- When a sacrifice is made, God blesses us.
 - **How does God bless us through our participation in the Mass, especially through the reception of the Eucharist?** (We receive grace, which gives us new life.)
 - **How does grace give us new life?** (Grace is God's life in us; if we allow grace to work in us, we can be transformed, and we are able to follow Christ and live as better Christians.)
 - **What is accomplished through the Paschal Mystery?** (The salvation of all mankind.)
- **How can we relive the Paschal Mystery in our own lives?** (Through our participation in the Mass and the liturgical year, and through our own suffering and blessings.)
- **What is the benefit of participating in the Paschal Mystery in the Mass or during the liturgical year?** (Through the grace of God, as we come to know, love, and serve Jesus, we will come to receive his blessings more fully and merit eternal life.)

Conclusion: The Paschal Mystery is the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are called to share in the life of Christ and receive new life.

Focus 3: The Paschal Mystery is celebrated during Holy Week. Through our participation in Holy Week, we share in the sufferings of Christ. As we share in the sufferings of Christ, we will also share in the power of the Resurrection.

- **Holy Week:**
 - **What does Holy week celebrate?** (The events of the Passion of Christ.)
 - **Why is Holy Week important?** (Through Jesus' death and Resurrection, our sins are forgiven, and we can receive the power of the Resurrection in our lives. He paid the price for our sins. We can walk with Christ, know him, and love him for all that he has done for us.)
- **Walk through** the events of Holy Week. Explain and discuss symbols and the meaning of each of these days using Scripture and artwork in the text (see below).
 - **Explain** that by examining Holy Week we will be preparing to enter into a deeper understanding of the Paschal Mystery, the mystery of God's saving works—the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.
- **Palm Sunday:** (Sunday before Easter). Palm Sunday celebrates the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to accomplish the Father's will.
 - **Artwork:** *Entry into Jerusalem*, Duccio, Student Text, p. 52
 - **Scripture:** John 12:12–13: "The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'"

- In obedience to the Father, Jesus goes to Jerusalem to offer his life for the sins of mankind.
- Jesus knew his time for suffering had come; he knew the religious authorities were conspiring against him.
- Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and many welcomed him as the Son of David, the long-awaited Savior or Messiah.
- At Palm Sunday Mass, palms are used to commemorate Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, as well as his obedience to the Father and his willingness to suffer to save us from our sins.
- The Gospel reading at Mass is the Passion of the Lord. Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week when we enter into the Passion of Christ. This is the holiest week of the liturgical year because through the Passion of Christ, we are redeemed.
- **Easter (or Sacred) Triduum:** The Easter Triduum is the holiest season of the year because it celebrates the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Briefly explain** the following, read the Scripture verses, and pray the Anima Christi prayer on Student Text, p. 179.
 - **Holy Thursday:** Celebration of the Last Supper.
 - Artwork: *The Last Supper*, Ghirlandaio, Nicolo Orsi, Student Text, p. 60, and *The Last Supper*, Duccio, Student Text, p. 110
 - Scripture: John 13:1–15 and Matthew 26:26–29
 - Jesus was celebrating the Passover feast.
 - Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles, and he instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist with the celebration of the first Mass.
 - At the Last Supper, Jesus makes the twelve Apostles the first priests of the Church.
 - The Last Supper ends with Jesus' Crucifixion.
 - **Good Friday:** Celebration of the Lord's Passion and death on the Cross.
 - Artwork: *The Descent from the Cross*, Rembrandt, Student Text, p. 115
 - Scripture: John 19:17–37
 - Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence.
 - It is the only day in the Roman Rite when Mass is not celebrated, but there is a Communion service as a part of the Good Friday service.
 - Reading of the Passion of Christ, the veneration of the Cross, and Stations of the Cross are included in the Good Friday service.
 - **Easter Vigil:** This takes place on the Saturday evening after Good Friday. It is the most solemn memorial of the entire liturgical year.

FOCUS 3 OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- Have students look up Scripture verses that help them to come to know, love, and serve Christ during Holy Week. (See chart below for Scripture verses.)

- Artwork: There is no artwork of the Resurrection in the Grade 7 Student Text. If possible, see Grade 6, p. 94, *Christ Risen from the Tomb*, Bergognone.
- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:20–22
- The Easter Vigil is the most beautiful liturgy of the year. It is divided into four parts:
 - Service of Light: The priest lights the Paschal candle from a new fire, saying, “May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.” All process into a dark church with candles lit from the Paschal candle. The *Exsultet* is sung. Jesus is the light that comes into the darkness of sin and evil, delivering us of our sins and raising us to new life.
 - Liturgy of the Word: The Scripture readings tell the story of salvation.
 - Liturgy of Baptism: Catechumens are baptized.
 - Liturgy of the Eucharist: Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist, and the past events of the Paschal Mystery become present during the Mass.
- The Easter Vigil is the culmination of the Paschal Mystery (the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which we are saved from our sins).
 - The Easter Vigil celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his death.
- **Easter Sunday:** Celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
 - Artwork: There is no artwork of the Resurrection in the Grade 7 Student Text. If possible, see Grade 6, p. 94, *Christ Risen from the Tomb*, Bergognone.
 - Scripture: John 20:1–9.
 - In the Holy Mass the past events of the Passion, death, and Resurrection become present to us. Through our participation, we share in the sacrifice of Christ, and we receive new life.
 - Through the power of the Resurrection, we will share in Christ’s joy. We too will rise one day.

Conclusion: As we walk through Holy Week, we share in the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ as we celebrate the Paschal Mystery. Jesus had to die so that we could have eternal life. We too must die to our sins (give them up) so that we can have new life in Christ.

Review Lesson (3 minutes)

- By participating in the liturgical year, we are walking with Christ in the story of salvation history.
- As we walk through Holy Week, we walk through the Paschal Mystery: the suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

- Lent is a penitential season of sacrifice. Easter is a season of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

Application (20–30 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following for discussion.

- Liturgical Calendar: Hand out copies of the timeline found on Appendix p. A-46 and Appendix pp. B-41–B-42 for the chart below, use the sections for Lent and Easter.
 - **Review Optional:**
 - The Church seasons celebrate the saving events of salvation history with a focus on the life of Christ.
 - Use the chart to briefly explain the theme for each season.
 - When we participate in each of the Church seasons, we experience the life of Christ.
 - For example, a person who experiences the death of a family member goes through suffering, but if he unites his suffering with Christ's, he comes to know some of what Christ did for us in his suffering. In this way, he comes to know Christ, and by sharing in the story, he is participating in the mystery.
 - *Have you ever shared someone else's happiness or sorrow? (Answers will vary.)*
 - Throughout our lives and through our participation in the liturgical year, as we share in the life of Christ, we participate in the story of salvation history.
 - In our own lives when we experience true joy or when we sacrifice or suffer, as we unite ourselves to Christ, we actually are participating in the life of Christ.
 - In Christ, we come to know who we are. As we experience the joy and peace and even the sufferings of Christ, and we unite our life with the life of Christ, we come to understand life.
 - Jesus' Passion shows us his love and how he suffered for us.
 - *What liturgical season does this remind you of? When do we sacrifice something of ourselves for God? (Lent.)*
 - *Is there anyone or anything in the timeline with which you can identify? (Answers will vary.)*
 - For the seasons of Lent and Easter, in the third column of the Church seasons chart, read the examples of the people in the Bible (review the stories in the text or Bible). Discuss the people listed and what they did that goes along with the themes of Lent and Easter.

Church Season	Theme	Examples: Old Testament and New Testament	My Commitment through Prayer, Sacrifice, and Obedience
Lent	<i>Sacrifice, self-giving love, repentance, forgiveness, mercy</i>	Joseph shows mercy to his brothers, who had caused him much suffering. (See Genesis 50:20–21 and Student Text, pp. 32–33.) David repented and asked for healing. (See Psalm 51 and Student Text, p. 39.) Jesus forgives us for our sins and heals us and calls us to deny ourselves. (See John 8:11; Matthew 16:24; and Student Text, pp. 127–29.)	<i>I will repent and ask for healing in my life.</i> <i>I will forgive others, in particular ...</i> <i>I will show mercy by ...</i> <i>I will change my heart by ...</i> <i>I will give selflessly by ...</i> <i>I will deny myself and take up my cross by...</i>
Easter	<i>Joy comes through suffering, new life</i>	Resurrection of Jesus Christ: We find new life and joy through our suffering. (See Romans 8:28; James 1:2–3; 2 Corinthians 4:7–14.)	<i>I will be grateful, positive, and joyful in all things by ...</i> <i>I will trust and realize that God blesses us through our obedience in times of trial and persecution by ...</i>

- In the fourth column, have each student make a personal commitment that they will follow to enter into Lent and Easter.
- God has revealed himself to us throughout these Bible stories. He wants us to know him and his love for us. He wants us to know that he is a good and gracious God who has patience with his people, and who is very loving and merciful.
- When we participate in God's story through the liturgical year or by learning about our own lives by looking at these people in the Bible, God bestows his blessings on us, just as he did with all of the people in salvation history.

Celebration (5–10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following.

- Pray Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love, Student Text, pp. 175–76.



existence had no beginning and will have no end.

Moses Returns to the Land of Egypt

Obedying the will of God, Moses traveled to Egypt where he was accepted by the Israelites as a prophet sent from the Lord. God chose his brother, Aaron, to be his companion in God's service and they both went to Pharaoh with this message: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go'" (Ex 5:1).

But the Pharaoh would not think of it! Instead he increased the labor of the Jews and treated them even more harshly. In order to punish his stubbornness God sent ten plagues upon the land: water turned into blood; frogs overran the countryside; gnats were like a thick dust; flies swarmed; animals died; boils and

sores afflicted men and animals; hailstorms descended upon the land; locusts destroyed their crops; and for three days all of Egypt was plunged into darkness. Even after all of these terrible signs, Pharaoh refused to obey the will of God in letting the Jewish people go!

The Passover of the Lord

Before sending the tenth and final plague (which was to be the death of every firstborn son and animal), God told Moses to have each Israelite family hold a special religious meal which would be a sign that they were members of his sacred people. Every family was to kill a lamb and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were to eat this holy meal standing, ready to leave on a journey. Before finishing this ceremony, they were to sprinkle the lamb's blood on their wooden doorposts, for this would be a signal that the home was to be spared from the tenth plague. When the angel of death went throughout the land carrying out this plague, he would *pass over* the homes sprinkled with blood. Thus the meal became known as the **Passover**. Even today, Jewish families gather together to celebrate the feast of the Passover; it is always celebrated near our Christian feast of Easter.

The Passover meal was a special preparation of God's people for Christ's saving death and for the Mass, which is the sacred sacrifice-meal of the new chosen people, the Church. Let us pause to compare these important events.

The Israelites gathered together for the Passover by the command of God; we Catholics come together every Sunday for Mass as Christ commands us. During their ceremony the Israelites sacrificed an animal known as the Paschal lamb; we offer the Father the Eucharistic sacrifice of Jesus, who is the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:36). At the Passover meal the Israelites ate the sacrificed lamb; at every Eucharist we

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CHAPTER 9

The Priesthood of Jesus

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:8–10

In the last chapter we learned that one of Jesus' roles as the Savior was to be our priest. This meant that he was to offer the Father a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Because this is a most important part of our salvation we will look more closely at the priesthood of Jesus in this chapter.

Offering Sacrifices to God

We have seen that the idea of offering sacrifices to God has been part of salvation history since the days of the Exodus. But it really goes all the way back to Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve.

The first sacrifices mentioned in the Bible were those of these two brothers:

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell (Gen 4:3–5).

This story shows us that God looks not only at what is offered but also at the heart of the one making the offering.

The Bible also tells us that Noah offered an animal on an altar to God, thanking him for having spared his family during the great flood and acknowledging God to be Lord and Creator of the earth.

The book of Leviticus, in the Old Testament, has to do with the offering of sacrifices to God; it tells us that these sacrifices were com-



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The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

manded by God as a way of showing sorrow for sin. Through these offerings the chosen people hoped to obtain forgiveness.

We learn from the Bible three very important things about offering sacrifices to God:

1. The gift must be offered with a pure or sinless heart.
2. The offering is a thanksgiving to God for his blessings and protection.
3. The offering of sacrifices shows sorrow for sin and a desire for forgiveness.

These Old Testament accounts of sacrifice also remind us that three things are required for every offering:

1. a **priest**, that is, someone to do the offering. In the Jewish nation God himself selected certain men to be his priests.
2. a **victim**, that is, something to be offered. God told the Jews to offer certain animals, especially the Passover lamb.
3. an **altar**, that is, somewhere for this offering to take place. For the Jewish priests the altars of sacrifice were located in the temple.

Jesus Our Sinless High Priest

All of the Jewish sacrifices were but a preparation for the one perfect sacrifice that Jesus was to offer to God. He is called our high priest, which means that he is the greatest priest of God. Why? Because he was sinless

and the Son of God, who came down from heaven in order to give perfect worship to the Father. The other priests were but imperfect men who could not worship God with sinless hearts.

Jesus Our Sinless Victim

Along with being the priest of his sacrifice, Jesus was also the victim. His altar, or place of offering, was the table of the Last Supper and the Cross of Calvary: two different places but only one priest, one victim, and one sacrifice.

At the Last Supper Jesus the perfect priest offered himself to the Father under the appearances of bread and wine. He had changed these into himself with the words, "This is my Body. . . . This is the chalice of my Blood." Thus the perfect victim was being offered.

The words, ". . . is given for you" (Lk 22:19–20), tell us two things: that Jesus is offering a sacrifice to God for our sakes and that this Sacrifice of the Eucharist is an anticipation of his Crucifixion, which happened the next day.

On Mount Calvary, the place where Jesus was crucified, the same sacrifice-offering to the Father was made. As with the Last Supper, Jesus was the priest who offered himself. He was the victim, but this time it was a bloody, painful offering. By his death, which the Lord offered *for us*, the one true sacrifice for sin was finally given to God. Unlike the animals offered by the Jewish priests, this sacrifice *worked!* It indeed made up for every sin and reconciled us to the Father!

How can we be sure? Because the Resurrection took place. This showed that God had accepted the sacrifice of his Son. We no longer need to wonder about it—Jesus was freed from the grip of death as the sign that we, too, are freed from death and its cause: sin. The great Saint Paul wrote about this in his letters to the Colossians and the Corinthians:

He has now reconciled [you] in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him (Col 1:22).

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Cor 15:17).

Jesus Our One Mediator

Besides the offering of sacrifice the priest had the duty of praying for his people, asking God to look upon their offering and to forgive their sins. This is called *mediation*, and the priest is a "go-between," or **mediator**.

As both God and man Jesus is our one, perfect mediator. On behalf of man and as a man Jesus bore the wounds of his Crucifixion for our sins. Because the wounds he bore did not separate him from the Father (he remained God, sinless and perfect even when he suffered as man), he could bring them to the Father as an offering for our sins. His wounds from the Crucifixion are no longer painful and bloody, but they are glorious reminders to the Father of his sacrifice. Also, he prays to the Father for us. He shows the wounds of the Crucifixion, now glorious, to the Father in remembrance of his one perfect sacrifice that took away our sins. Saint Paul revealed this truth of Jesus as our mediator to his friend and fellow bishop, Saint Timothy: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).

A Priest Like Melchizedek

Christ's priesthood is foretold in the Old Testament: "The LORD has sworn, and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Ps 110:4).

Who was Melchizedek and how is he con-

nected to Jesus' priesthood? He was a king of Salem (later called Jerusalem) and a priest who offered *bread and wine* to God in sacrifice. Saint Paul tells us that this is why he is compared to Jesus. No one else had offered the gifts of bread and wine, before Christ. Even today, at the *ordination* ceremonies of Catholic priests, the verse from Psalm 110 is used as one of the prayers for the Mass.

Words to Know:

priest victim altar mediator



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Q. 71 *How is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross a perfect sacrifice?*

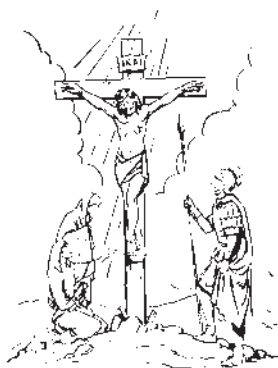
The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is a perfect sacrifice because he is the perfect priest who offered himself as the perfect victim in obedience and love for the salvation of man (CCC 2100).

Q. 72 *When was the sacrifice of Christ offered?*

The sacrifice of Christ was offered at the Last Supper and fulfilled on the Cross, in one and the same sacrifice to the Father (CCC 1340).

Q. 73 *How does the sacrifice of Christ continue today?*

The sacrifice of Christ continues today in the Holy Eucharist, in which Christ's Body and Blood are offered for the forgiveness of sins (CCC 1365–67).



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CHAPTER 22

The Eucharistic Sacrifice

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:14–15

As a Sacrament, we think of the Eucharist as a holy meal which Jesus told us to celebrate



in memory of him. The Mass looks like a meal for it has a table (altar) covered with a cloth, bread, wine, water, and people praying, eating, and drinking together as one family in Christ.

But the Mass is also a sacrifice. It has everything that is required for this act of worship to God: an altar dedicated for sacrifice, a priest who does the offering, and precious gifts to be offered. At the Last Supper, Jesus established the Mass as a spiritual reliving of his sacrifice on the Cross by the words he used. Think about the most important words at Mass, the **words of Consecration** which come to us from Christ himself:

This is my Body, which will be given up for you.

This is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

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See how they remind us of a sacrifice—a body to be given up and blood to be shed? Of course Jesus was talking about his sacrifice on the Cross; but the Mass he gave us is closely connected with it. The **Sacrifice of the Mass** is not a *new* sacrifice or *another* sacrifice. It is really the same one that Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross. How can this be? In both events there is only one priest (Jesus), who is offering the very same victim or gift (Jesus). So if you have the same priest and the very same offering, it must be the same sacrifice! This is hard to understand, but it is a great and precious mystery that we believe by faith.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

Of course there is some difference in the way the sacrifice of Jesus was offered on the Cross and in the Eucharist.

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Upon the Cross, Jesus offered himself in pain and bloody suffering. In the Mass he offers his Body and Blood under the appearances of the consecrated bread and wine. But it is the same Jesus.

Also, upon the Cross Jesus offered his sacrifice by himself. At Mass he offers it with his Church—through the priest and the congregation.

Saint Paul reminds us that the Eucharist is a reliving of the Sacrifice of the Cross. In his first letter to the Corinthians he tells us: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

We can also see that the Mass is a sacrifice by looking at the prayers used during its celebration:

With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our *sacrifice* in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God (Priest's Offertory prayer).

May the Lord accept the *sacrifice at your hands* for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church (People's Offertory prayer).

We, your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty... this pure *victim*, this holy *victim*, this spotless *victim*, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation (Eucharistic Prayer I).

May this *Sacrifice* of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world (Eucharistic Prayer III).

As we await his coming in glory, we offer you his Body and Blood, the *sacri-*

fice acceptable to you which brings salvation to the whole world (Eucharistic Prayer IV).

The Mass in Our Lives

The Mass, or celebration of the Eucharist, is the greatest worship we can offer to God. If we remember that being at Mass is very much like standing with our Lady beneath the Cross of Jesus, we will be sure to pray with love and devotion.

Some people may complain about not getting anything out of Mass. But in the Mass we have from God the greatest gift that anyone could receive. One way to be more receptive to this gift and to grow in your friendship with Christ is to prepare yourself for Mass every week.

Words to Know:

words of Consecration
Sacrifice of the Mass

Preparing for Mass

1. One good way to prepare for Mass is to go to confession frequently to receive God's help in overcoming your faults.
2. Spend a few minutes reading the Gospel passage that will be used at Mass. This will help you to learn about Jesus and his teachings.
3. Get to church a few minutes *before* Mass begins and ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to help you pray the Mass with faith, hope, and love.
4. Finally, do not rush out of church after Mass but try to spend a few minutes in private prayer with Jesus, whom you have just received. Speak to him in your own words as you would to a best friend, for he wants to be that to you.



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Q. 171 *Is the Eucharist only a Sacrament?*

No, the Eucharist is not only a Sacrament; it is also the permanent sacrifice of the New Covenant (CCC 1367, 1382).

Q. 172 *What is the Holy Mass?*

The Holy Mass is the sacrifice and sacred meal of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which is offered on the altar by Jesus, through the priest to God under the appearances of bread and wine, in memory of the Sacrifice of the Cross and in renewal of that same sacrifice (CCC 1367, 1382).

Q. 173 *Is the Sacrifice of the Mass the same sacrifice as the Sacrifice of the Cross?*

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the Cross; the only difference is in the manner of offering it (CCC 1366–67).

Q. 174 *What is the difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass?*

On the Cross, Jesus Christ offered himself in a bloody manner; on the altar, Jesus Christ offers himself in an unbloody manner, by the ministry of the priest (CCC 1367).

Q. 175 *For what purposes is the Mass offered to God?*

The Mass is offered to God to give him the supreme worship of adoration, to thank him for his blessings to us, to make satisfaction for our sin, and to obtain graces for the welfare of the faithful, living and dead (CCC 1368).