The Mass Explained

Notes of Fr David Dufresne

PREFACE:

* Overwhelming/Underwhelming
* “Do this!”- John 6- We understand Him literally- especially because this is how His friends the Apostles understood Him
* Context:
  + Immediate: Jesus: Jewish Passover- connecting three days in one event
    - Holy Thursday
    - Good Friday
    - Easter Sunday
  + Proximate: Apostles in Jerusalem
    - WORD: Synagogue on Saturday
    - EUCHARIST: home liturgy Sunday
  + Apostolic Traditions
    - Jewish Spirituality
    - Greek language
    - Roman culture
    - Didache c. 98, St. Justin Martyr c. 150
    - Slow adaptations
      * 23 Rites in the Catholic Church; we are discussing the Roman Latin Rite
      * Compared to others Rites- the Roman is the most sober, austere, efficient and practical.
      * There is very little symbolism for the sake of symbolism- what we may consider symbolism today was at one point simply practical- and we didn’t change it- and often added the symbolism later and then the deeper spiritual commentary
        + E.g. like the comingling of the water and wine
      * It is important to recognize that the Pope has authority over liturgical law- but only up to a point- like all of the faith.
* Take away message: the Mass is not a human invention. It did not slowly evolve over the centuries. It is not the byproduct of a medieval Church. The essence of Mass, even how we celebrate it today, even how it looks, smells and sounds- has apostolic origins.

The Introductory Rites

Vesting

* **Washing of Hands:** 
  + *Give strength to my hands, Lord, to wipe away all stain, so that I may be able to serve Thee in purity of mind and body.*
* **Cassock** – the “work clothes” of the priest- everyone used to have a long undyed tunic- we just never changed
  + *O Lord, the portion of my inheritance and my chalice, You are He who will restore my inheritance.*
* **Amice**- a later invention- probably around 400’s- to help the alb last longer, easier to lauder, everyone wore one, became a symbol of status, priest of poverty, which is our modern day collar. Helmet of salvation- our protection from above.
  + *Lord, set the helmet of salvation on my head to fend off all the assaults of the devil.*
* **Alb**- there were three main types of every-day clothes: the toga for the ruling class, a surplice for soldiers and day laborers, and the alb for philosophers and for dignified occasions- it was their “Sunday best”. It represents our baptismal dignity, putting on Christ, becoming a new creation, and our need to maintain the purity we receive from His grace. Rev 19:8 and the white-robed army in heaven.
  + *Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart; that being made white in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward.*
* **Cincture**- it was seen as barbaric to wear an alb without a belt- you were up to no good. Has come to symbolize chastity- a virtue we all need to order and control our emotions. [Ephesians 6:14; gird yourself with the truth]
  + *Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me.*
* **Maniple**- originally just a handkerchief that was draped over the left forearm of the priest so he could wipe off his sweat during Mass- it was omitted in Vatican II
  + *May I deserve, O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow in order that I may joyfully reap the reward of my labors.*
* **Stole**- originally a scarf that senators and magistrates would wear to designate their status- there were also greater punishments for hitting such people- a symbol of their authority
  + *Restore to me, O Lord, the stole of immortality, which I lost by the transgression of our first parents. Grant that, although I am unworthy to approach Thy sacred mysteries, I may be made worthy of everlasting joys.*
* **Chasuble**- an ancient rain poncho- the most expensive thing most people owned. The poor used it as their blanket and passed it down from generation to generation. Literally it just means house. Has come to symbolize charity- since the love of God and neighbor needs to cover all we do. [Col 3:4] Many have a yoke or cross designed on them to highlight the priest being united to Christ at Mass
  + *O Lord, who has said, ‘My yoke is sweet and My burden light,’ grant that I may so carry it as to merit Thy grace.*

**Procession**

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders, a person of greater dignity has entered the room
* Pilgrimage toward heaven
* Christ leads us- the Crucifix
* Christ is our destination
  1. Present in His Body, the People
  2. Present in His Head, the Priest
  3. Present in His Word
  4. Present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity
* Christ is our light- candles around the altar were necessity in the catacombs
* The architecture of the Church is important- head and body- Cruciform

Entrance antiphon

* Setting the mood, placing the context for the rest of the Mass

Reverence the **altar**-

* In Rome, the first Masses were said in the catacombs because the Roman authorities were very superstitious and would not go into cemeteries. The priest would say Mass on top of a rock casket dug into the wall- and pick a tomb of a martyr- so by kissing it- he is making reverence to the sacrifice of a previous generation of Christians. That is why we have relics in our altar today.
* Which represents a tomb where Jesus was laid and rose from the dead

**Chair**- the cathedra- the sign of authority

1. **The Sign of the Cross- [Matthew 28:19]**
   1. The earliest of prayers
   2. The power of the NAME
   3. The sign of our Redemption, Invocation of God; Holy Trinity of Persons
   4. Body, Mind, Soul united
   5. East vs West- left vs right- from weakness to glory, from heaven to earth
2. **Greeting: “the Lord be with you” [Ruth 2:4, 2 Corinthians 13:13]**
   1. Communication with the head and body- may the Lord be our glue

3-6 we have our prayer up to God

1. **I confess…[Psalm 51]**
   1. Reformed throughout the centuries, most recently after Vatican II
   2. Essential for communion is our desire to be rid of all that could keep us from communion- we must be empty of sin in order to be filled with grace
   3. It is personal and communal “I confess” together
      1. Sincerely prayed, has the power to forgive venial sin
      2. Mortal sins must be taken to sacramental confession
2. **Lord, have mercy [Luke 18:13]**
   1. The only part of the Mass that can be recited in Greek, call back to the original
   2. {Hebrew elements are Amen, Alleluia, Hosanna, Sabaoth)
3. **Gloria [Luke 2:14, Revelation 19:6]**
   1. Mentioned being used in Rome for Christmas by Pope Telesphorus in mid 130’s
4. **Collect**
   1. The priest is collecting the prayers of the people and presenting them to the Father.
   2. The “Orans” position is proper to the priest- it is the image of Moses interceding for the people in battle, the image of Jesus praying on the Cross
      1. Everything in the Mass is directed TO the Father, THROUGH Jesus, in the Spirit
   3. There are certain Collects that go back to Apostolic times, others that originated in local Churches that have since been universalized

**The Liturgy of the Word [Mass of Catechumens]**

* POSTURE: Sit. Conversational. Relaxed. Dialog among friends.

Lectionary

* Recently revised at Vatican II
  + 3 Year Sunday cycle, Matthew, Mark, Luke (John during Easter)
  + 2 Year Weekday cycle
  + Much more Scripture, but the themes are not as tight
* Prior was a 1-year cycle, nearly identical to the one composed by St Jerome +420
  + Everything was in one book, and it was all read by the priest
  + First reading was almost always a letter from NT
* Prior to that was the fact Christians grew out of the Jewish tradition , specifically the Synagogue tradition- so the first Christians would gather in the Synagogue, listen to the Hebrew Scriptures, then go someone’s house, the priest would undoubtedly talk about how Jesus fulfilled the OT, and then go on to the Liturgy of the Eucharist- the Breaking of the Bread

7-13: we have God’s Word coming down to speak to us, homily & Creed to instruct

1. **The first reading, [Men inspired by the Holy Spirit]**
   1. OT- often paired with Gospel
2. **Responsorial psalm (or Gradual)**
   1. Temple worship since King David was choral
3. **Second reading [Men inspired by the Word Made Flesh]**
   1. NT Epistle Seems to be on it’s own cycle
4. **Alleluia verse (Tract)**
   1. Any part of Scripture that sets the context for the Gospel
5. **The Gospel [The Word made Flesh Speaks Directly]**

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders
  1. Prayer of the priest. [Isaiah 6:7]
     1. Reverence is payed to the altar- Where Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are truly and sacramentally made present
     2. Also, things like Tabernacles were not universal until 1215.
     3. *“Cleanse my heart and my life, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel”*
  2. Christ the priest is proclaiming His Word.
     1. *Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away*

1. **The homily [Jesus speaking still through His Church]**

* POSTURE: Sit. Conversational. Relaxed. Dialog among friends.
  1. The bridge between the Word made Written and the Word made Flesh.

1. **The Creed**

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders- also the traditional posture of prayer- in anticipation of the Resurrection
  1. First used in baptism as interrogation (record from St Hippolytus c. 230), St Cyril of Jerusalem + 386
  2. Recited as a statement in Mass Antioch, c. 471

1. **Universal Prayer: The prayer of the faithful**
   1. Historically, the only thing like this were the Good Friday petitions
   2. Mentioned by St. Justin Martyr’s description of the Mass c. 155 (East retains it as a formal litany)
   3. Vatican II; link between our response to God’s word and the prayer of the altar- restored this practice we used in 400’s

* In the first few centuries, all non-Catholics and public sinners had to leave the Church at this point and kneel outside of the Church.

**The Liturgy of the Eucharist [Mass of the Faithful]**

15- our offering to God

1. **The Preparation of the Gifts/Offertory** 
   1. The presentation of the gifts bread & wine
      1. From the beginning- a procession of goods made by everyone that was later redistributed by the Apostles/priests/deacons
      2. St. Cyprian +258 chided those who received Holy Communion without making an offering
      3. One from many- **wheat, grapes**
         1. They must be broken, - if we want God to use us- we must be broken- die to self- then blessed and transformed
         2. Jesus cannot die again- but He looking to die and rise again in us
      4. Sustenance & gratuity
         1. “Give us this day our super-substantial bread”
         2. Manna from Heaven-
            1. There was a promise attached to the coming of the Messiah that he would restore the Manna to the Temple Sanctuary
            2. Manna had a sweet taste as a foretaste of the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey
            3. It feeds our deepest needs, daily
      5. Making our total offering of self, God does amazing things with it
         1. We not only offer the fruits of our labor (money, bread, wine) but our entire lives, hearts, minds, hopes, fears- and the Lord transforms them.
      6. Unleavened because of Passover, it’s what Jesus used
      7. Prayers changed at Vatican II from “Accept, O holy Father…this unposted host…” to a Jewish prayer of Blessing found in the Mishna *Berakoth* (Blessings) & Talmud- offering prayers in the synagogue/outside of the temple/ and later in the home by the father at the feast of Passover. Most likely, these are close to the prayers Jesus used: “*Blessed are you, Lord God of creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life*” (changed)
   2. Mixing water and wine,
      1. That is what Jesus did- his wine was more like jelly, very strong
      2. *“By the mingling of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled Himself to share in our humanity”* (slightly abridged)
      3. St Cyprian of Carthage + 258 already mentioned we do this because Jesus did- but has since become symbolic of the union between Christ and His Church (water)
         1. Jesus also did this at Passover, because they must drink four cups- so to avoid drunkenness
   3. Bow
      1. *“With a humble spirit and a contrite heart, may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, O Lord.”* (unchanged)
   4. washing hands,
      1. Borrowed from Jewish temple sacrifice
      2. Historically practical- the bread & offerings would be dirty
      3. Mentioned in detail by St. Cyril of Jerusalem
      4. Washing of hands [Psalm 51]
         1. *“Wash me O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins”* (was Psalm 25, “I will wash my hands among the innocent…”)
      5. Purity of lips to proclaim the Gospel, purity of hands to consecrate hosts- purity of heart to receive Him
      6. “Pray, brethren”…a command we are **both** offering something “My sacrifice AND YOURS” may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father
         1. “May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands…”

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders- also the traditional posture of prayer- in anticipation of the Resurrection
  1. Prayer over the offerings (used to be called Secret, was silent)
     1. Pregame for the Preface
* Jesus Christ is priest and victim (the one who offers and the one who is offered)- at Mass, Christ the priest is present in the ordained minister, and Christ the victim is present in the bread and wine.
  + In our full participation in the Mass- we can unite ourselves to Christ; priest and victim. What are we offering? How can we offer ourselves?

1. **The Eucharistic Prayer**
2. The Preface
   1. Seasonal, set’s the tone
   2. Initial dialog [the melody predates Christ]
      1. The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.
      2. Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord.
      3. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and just.
   3. Opening paragraph- Thanksgiving/Eucharist
      1. It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
   4. Liturgical season
   5. In union with the Angels and Saints (of the 9 choirs)
      1. Through Him the (1) Angels praise your majesty, (2) Dominions adore and (3) Powers tremble before you. Heaven and the (4) Virtues of heaven and the blessed (5) Seraphim worship together with exultation. May our voices, we pray, join with theirs in humble praise, as we acclaim:
         1. Seraphim- the ones mentioned in Is 6
         2. Cherubim- close to God’s glory Rev 5-6
         3. Thrones- bridge between angels
         4. Dominions- regulate role of lower angels
         5. Virtues- spirits of motion- govern nature
         6. Powers- govern evil spirits
         7. Archangels- chief messengers
         8. Principalities- minister to Christ
         9. Angels- govern humans
3. The **Sanctus**- [Isaiah 6:3]
   1. Hebrew did not have superlative; good, better, best. For them is something was better- they would just say good, good. So God is not just Holy- He is Holiness itself.
   2. In temple worship, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies at the signing of the Sanctus.
   3. Heaven and earth are united in worship
   4. St. Clement of Rome +104 mentions it
   5. Bridge of the Eucharist from the Presentation to Canon through Thanksgiving

* POSTURE: Kneel. Bodily sign of humility, we recognize our littleness in the sight of someone much greater. It is a sign of our weakness in the presence of someone stronger.

1. **Roman Canon** (codified by Gregory the Great in 590, evidence it was used in Rome by Pope Victor +190, from Africa who introduced Latin, Damascus +384 makes references to many elements- St. Jerome provides lectionary. It was unchanged from 600’s century until John XXIII added St. Joseph to the first litany in 1962.
   1. Remembrance Prayers
      1. The Church, The Pope, Our Bishop
      2. The Living (up to two intentions)
      3. Invocation of the Saints
         1. BVM (seated on the right)
         2. 12 Apostles
         3. 12 Others; 5 Popes, 1 African (St Cyprian), 1 Deacon (Lawrence), 5 Laymen
   2. Offertory Prayers
      1. Epi-klesis – laying on of hands to signify what is being offered, calling down the Holy Spirit- much like Elijah over the soaked oxen
      2. Jewish ceremonial offerings were first elevated (to show it was being offered to God) and then would be traced in a cross to ask that it be applied N, S, E, W
   3. CONSECRATION [Matthew 26:26]
      1. Separation of Body & Soul- Death- Crucifixion of Our Lord
      2. The power of the Word of God- using the minister
      3. In remembrance- *anamnesin*- in the Jewish Passover there is a clear connection to the first Passover- this is what God did for me- while the action began long ago- I am made to participate in it here and now
      4. The ringing of bells in the ancient world signified that the King present and invited everyone to come out and see him
         1. There arose a custom in some towns to spend Sunday going from Consecration to Consecration- just to see Jesus elevated in the Host- the Church extended this and constructed a Monstrance so we can come to adore Him
         2. The shedding of blood is what ratified covenants
      5. Mystery of Faith [1 Tim 3:16, 1 Cor 15]
         1. Mysterion can also be translated as Sacrament.
         2. It referred to how we are initiated into this Sacred Pact
   4. Offertory Prayers
      1. Offering to the Father the life, death, resurrection and glorious ascension of Jesus
      2. Uniting this sacrifice to the eternal worship in heaven- by the mediation of the angels
         1. Abel- unblemished lamb
         2. Abraham- only son
         3. Melchisedec- bread and wine
   5. Remembrance Prayers
      1. The Dead (up to two)
      2. Invocation of the Saints
         1. St John the Baptist (seated on the left)
         2. 7 men martyrs (priests and laymen)
         3. 7 women martyrs (married, widows, & virgins)
2. Doxology- Glory- final offering to the Father-

17 & 18 God comes to us, and then sends us out to be His emissaries

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders- also the traditional posture of prayer- in anticipation of the Resurrection

1. **The Communion Rite**
2. The Lord’s Prayer
   1. Introduction
   2. Our Father [Matthew 6:9-13]
      1. In Temple worship, the High Priest would exit the Holy of Holies with a song of praise- and here we have the perfect prayer.
   3. Deliver us from evil- continuing prayer on deliverance [John 14:27]
   4. Fraction of Host
   5. Re-unification of body-soul- Resurrection & Ascension
3. The Rite of Peace
   1. The Risen Jesus is our peace
   2. These are His first words after the Resurrection, breaking through the door of fear and shame “Peace be with you”
   3. “Leave there your offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to your brother, then come back and offer your gift.”
4. Agnus Dei- [John 1:29]
   1. The Lamb on the altar, looks slain, dies no more
   2. Private prayers of purification & preparation
   3. Behold the Lamb! [Revelation 19:9]
   4. Lord, I am not worthy! [Matthew 8:8]
      1. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me” Rev 3:20
5. Holy Communion
   1. Rite of reception
      1. The priest now prays to Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament:
      2. O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Who, by the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, have by Your death given life to the world, deliver me by this Your Most Sacred Body and Blood from all my sins and from every evil. Make me always cling to Your commandments, and never permit me to be separated from You. Who with the same God the Father and the Holy Spirit, live and reign, God, world without end. Amen.  
           
         Let not the partaking of Your Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, though unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but through Your goodness, may it become a safeguard and an effective remedy, both of soul and body. Who live and reign with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.
      3. “May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul to eternal life.”

* This is the apex of the Mass. The consecration is obviously amazing- but we can ask, “Why?” Jesus instituted the Mass not just so He could be present to us- but so that He could be present IN US.
  + St. Philip Neri once saw a man leave Church after receiving Holy Communion- so he had the altar boys get two candles and follow him. The man asked what they were doing and they responded, “Eucharistic procession.”
* The point of the Mass is to transform us. We can’t view it like what are we getting- like a cookie for good behavior- but a total exchange of persons. When we empty ourselves, and admit how much we need God, He fills us with Himself.
* Even if we can’t receive, we should make **a spiritual communion.** 
  1. Ablutions & Purification of the sacred vessels
     1. What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity

1. **The Concluding Rites**

* POSTURE: Stand- at attention, ready for orders- also the traditional posture of prayer- in anticipation of the Resurrection
  1. Greeting
  2. Prayer after Communion
  3. Blessing
     1. Up until the 12th century, there was no blessing. This was something the priest imparted to the servers after Mass and folks got jealous.
  4. Dismissal
     1. Ite, Missa est. This was a formal way Romans concluded public assemblies- something like “Meeting adjourned” But this is where we get the term Mass from- “You are dismissed” A looser translation could have it that “you are sent forth- you are now sent on a mission”
  5. Prayers at the end of Mass
     1. 3 Hail Mary’s
     2. Hail Holy Queen
     3. Protection of the Church
     4. St Michael the Archangel
     5. Sacred Heart of Jesus
     6. Second Gospel

Stay to make an act of Thanksgiving, but also recognize that the Holy Eucharist is Jesus thanking the Father for the opportunity to create, love, and redeem you.

Jesus wants to BE with us

Jesus wants to heal, redeem, and sanctify us

Jesus wants to teach us that He can take ordinary stuff that may seem inadequate and transform it into something with infinite value.

Eucharist is Thanksgiving- our Thanksgiving to God- but more accurately- Jesus Thanksgiving to the Father for you.

*Prayer before Mass of St Thomas Aquinas:*

Almighty and everlasting God, behold I come to the Sacrament of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: I come as one infirm to the physician of life, as one unclean to the fountain of mercy, as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness, as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore I implore the abundance of Thy measureless bounty that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to heal my infirmity, wash my uncleanness, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty and clothe my nakedness, that I may receive the Bread of Angels, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, with such reverence and humility, with such sorrow and devotion, with such purity and faith, with such purpose and intention as may be profitable to my soul's salvation. Grant unto me, I pray, the grace of receiving not only the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood, but also the grace and power of the Sacrament. O most gracious God, grant me so to receive the Body of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, which He took from the Virgin Mary, as to merit to be incorporated into His mystical Body, and to be numbered amongst His members. O most loving Father, give me grace to behold forever Thy beloved Son with His face at last unveiled, whom I now purpose to receive under the sacramental veil here below.  
Amen.