

THE INCREDIBLE CATHOLIC MASS

He is able also to save for ever them that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, in offering Himself.

—Hebrews 7:25-27

THE INCREDIBLE CATHOLIC MASS

AN EXPLANATION OF THE MASS

Fr. Martin von Cochem, O.S.F

*From the rising of the sun even to the
going down, my name is great among the
Gentiles, and in every place there is sacri-
fice, and there is offered to my name a clean
oblation: for my name is great among the
Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts*

—*Malachias 1:11*

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*“For if the blood of goats and of oxen,
and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled,
sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing
of the flesh: how much more shall the blood
of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered
himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our
conscience from dead works, to serve the
living God?”*

—Hebrews 9:13–14

Publisher's Preface

Before they would read *The Incredible Catholic Mass*, probably not ten percent of lay adult Catholics today know even ten percent of what this book contains. Yet most Catholics behave as though they know all they need to about the Mass, and inducing them to read anything about it would be difficult at best—largely because most books on the Mass are dry and theologically oriented, not aimed at the reader personally, as this one is. That is why, in searching for a suitable title for this modernized translation of Fr. Martin von Cochem's *Die heilige Messe für die Weltleute* ("Holy Mass for Everyone"), we have chosen the very provocative title, *The Incredible Catholic Mass*. For truly that is what the Mass is, "incredible"—as a reading of Fr. Cochem's book will prove—incredible indeed that Almighty God should have given mankind such a stupendous gift, such a powerful tool, such a limitless resource, one wherewith to obtain from Him whatever of a legitimate nature we may ask for (so long as we are in the state of grace, of course, and pray with confidence, constancy and humility).

Fr. Martin von Cochem, O.S.F. (1625-1712) was a German Franciscan priest and a learned theologian who entered the religious state while yet quite young, and after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the plague which followed it—which wrought such tremendous devastation

to Germany that there was as high as eighty percent depopulation in some areas—he was appalled at the religious ignorance of his people. To rectify this deplorable situation, he set about to compose popularly oriented books on numerous religious topics.

By far the most popular of his works, and universally acknowledged as the best, is the present book on the Mass, titled in its original English edition, Cochem's *Explanation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* and often simply called *An Explanation of the Mass*. (Also well known to English readers is the author's book *The Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven*, TAN, 1987, which has been instrumental in the conversion of many people.)

The Incredible Catholic Mass is fundamentally an explanation of the *essence* of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and though it is based on the Traditional Latin Mass, it is not really about *that* rite of Mass at all, but about the Mass *in general*, about any and every Mass, in whatever rite—about the *essence* of the Mass. Basically, *the book is an instruction in what the Mass actually is in itself and how we may offer it with the priest in the most intelligent and effective manner*, bringing thereby the greatest possible benefit to ourselves, to those for whom we pray, to the Poor Souls in Purgatory, to the Universal Church and to the society in which we live.

Devout Catholics today often groan over the moral atrocities that are being committed by their fellow citizens, and oftentimes even by their own relatives and friends. But for the most part they do not realize they have within reach in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the antidote to all the evils

they decry. Many also lament the apostatizing of their children and other loved ones, yet they are seemingly unaware that the means of bringing them back to the One Fold is no farther than the nearest Mass—when intelligently offered with proper devotion and the normal requisites for effective prayer. For the Mass, as Fr. Martin von Cochem so ably demonstrates, is, so to speak, the direct line to the “heart of God,” because we have as intercessor and mediator in the Mass none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself. Therefore, the Mass is the spiritual tool for obtaining from God *whatever* good we can rightfully ask for.

The present edition of Fr. Cochem’s book on the Mass is being made available in this inexpensive edition in the interest of widespread distribution and thereby of challenging Catholics and non-Catholics alike to familiarize themselves with the nature of the Mass and why it is that we should attend it often, even daily if possible. The world seems to be fast approaching a cataclysmic crisis of universal dimension—some even believe the End of the World—and people need the consolation and encouragement that this book contains, so that they will know for certain that God has not abandoned them, or the world, but that it is we—through our infidelity, negligence, ignorance and indifference—who have abandoned God, and the means He has given us to help solve all our problems.

This answer sounds simple. But like all true answers to great and complex problems, it *is* simple! Implementing this answer, however, will take a person a little study. It will take the study of this present book. No one should say

to himself, “I know about the Mass,” until he has read this book. If people *really* “knew about the Mass”—after the manner that this book instructs—Catholic churches would be full every day at Mass-time. After all, every one of us wants good things for himself, and if someone were to hold them forth on a silver platter for us to take just for the asking, no one would decline. Yet, far more indeed is being extended to us by the very hand of God in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and most of us do not even realize it, nor so much as raise our hand to receive it!

Accept, then, Dear Reader, the challenge to immerse yourself in the contents of this seemingly divinely inspired book, that you may come to the realization that God has provided us the means by which to obtain from Him whatever that is good that we can rightfully ask for. Read this book and be informed about what your God has done for you, what incredible means He has put at your disposal, means by which you may obtain from Him whatever you have a right to ask. Read it through from beginning to end, and then start again to read back through it, slowly, every day, a chapter at a time, until its concepts are your own and until you know perfectly what it teaches and how to apply its principles in your prayer life. Then, every few years, read it again.

Thereafter, in your personal life no problem will assail you that you cannot overcome by applying the principles elucidated in this book. There will be no legitimate favor you cannot obtain from Almighty God by praying after the manner taught here. Grasping this power and making it your own is simply a matter of first learning what you have

at your disposal in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and then applying that knowledge with faith! May God bless you and reward your effort a thousandfold!

The Publisher

July 22, 1997

Feast of St. Mary Magdalene

About the Author*

Fr. Martin von Cochem was a celebrated German theologian, preacher and ascetical writer, born in 1630 at Cochem, a small town on the Moselle River; he died in the convent at Waghäusel September 10, 1712. He came from a family devotedly attached to the Faith, and while still young entered the novitiate of the Capuchins, where he distinguished himself by his fervor and his fidelity to the religious rule. After his elevation to the priesthood, he was assigned to a professorship of theology, a position which for several years he filled most creditably.

However, it was in another sphere that he was to exercise his zeal and acquire fame. Of the evils which befell Europe in consequence of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the plague was by no means the least, and when in 1666 it made its appearance in the Rhenish country, such were its ravages that it became necessary to close the novitiates and houses of study. Just at this crisis, Father Martin was left without any special charge, and in company with his fellow monks he devoted himself to the bodily and spiritual comfort of the afflicted. What most distressed him was the religious ignorance to which a large number of the faithful had fallen victim on account of being deprived of their pastors. To combat this sad condition, he resolved

* Adapted from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 Edition.

to compose little popular treatises on the truths and duties of religion, and in 1666 he published at Cologne a resumé of Christian doctrine that was very well received. It was a revelation to his superiors, who strongly encouraged the author to continue in this course.

Thereafter, Father Martin made a specialty of popular preaching and religious writing, and in the Archdioceses of Trier and Ingelheim, which he traversed thoroughly, multitudes pressed about him and numerous conversions followed. The zealous priest continued these active ministrations up to the time of his death, and even when he had passed his eightieth year, he still went daily to the chapel of his convent, where, with the aid of an ear-trumpet, he heard the Confessions of the sinners who flocked to him. The intervals between missions he devoted to his numerous writings, the most voluminous of which is an ecclesiastical history in two large volumes, composed for apologetic purposes and provoked by the attacks made upon the Church by Protestantism. However, the author brought it down only to the year 1100. Father Martin's other works embrace a great variety of subjects: The life of Christ, legends of the Saints, edifying narratives, the setting forth of certain points in Christian asceticism, forms of prayer, methods to be followed for the worthy reception of the Sacraments, etc.

These widely different themes have as points of similarity a pleasing, graceful style, great erudition and a truly seraphic eloquence. They bespeak for their author sincere piety and deep religious sentiment, coupled with an intimate knowledge of the popular heart and the special needs of the time. But the best known of all the learned Capuchin's works is unquestionably *Die heilige Messe* ("The

Holy Mass”), upon which, according to his own statement, he spent three entire years perusing Holy Writ, the Councils, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the lives of the Saints, in order to condense into a small volume a properly abridged account of the Holy Sacrifice. As soon as it appeared, this book proved a delight to the Catholics of Germany, nor has it yet lost any of its popularity, and since its translation into several languages, it may be said to have acquired universal renown.

It demanded a great expenditure of energy on the part of this worthy religious to bring these undertakings to a successful issue. When in his convent, he spent most of the day in directing souls and following the observances prescribed by the Capuchin Rule; therefore, it was time set aside for sleep that he was accustomed to give to his literary labors. Sometimes after the Office of Matins, he would obtain permission of the superior to go to Frankfurt to confer with his publisher, and this accomplished, he would return on foot to his convent at Königstein, catechizing little children, hearing Confessions and visiting the sick along the way. At the age of eighty-two, while still in the midst of his labors, he was attacked by an illness, to which he soon succumbed.

Fr. Martin von Cochem wrote numerous books, of which some 21 were published during his lifetime.

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A Glossary of Important Terms

Atonement: Satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury; amends. In theology, the act of reconciling (making “at-one”) man with God, especially as accomplished through the life, suffering and death of Christ.

Anathema: A formal ecclesiastical condemnation involving excommunication. An imprecation of divine punishment.

Burnt-Offering: An offering burned upon an altar in sacrifice to God or to a false deity.

Condign: Deserved: fitting, adequate, worthy.

Deign: To condescend or bend down to a lower level; to think fit or in accordance with one’s dignity. To condescend (to give or grant). To vouchsafe.

Ecumenical (Oecumenical): General, universal. Pertaining to the whole Christian (Catholic) Church. Promoting or fostering Christian (Catholic) unity throughout the world.

Efficacious: Effective as a means, measure or remedy. Having the desired result or effect.

Expiation: The act of or means by which atonement or reparation is made. Satisfaction. Expiation for sin is the satisfaction made for the temporal punishment or “spiritual debt” left over after sin has been forgiven, which satisfaction must be made in this world or in Purgatory.

Holocaust: A great or complete devastation, especially by fire. A sacrifice completely consumed by fire; a burnt offering.

Hosanna: A shout of praise or adoration; an acclamation.

Hypostatic Union: The union of the two distinct natures of God and man in the one Person of Jesus Christ, who is both true God and true man.

Ignominy: Disgrace, dishonor, public contempt. A shameful or dishonorable quality or conduct, or an instance of these.

Immolate: To sacrifice; to kill as a sacrificial victim, as by fire; to offer in sacrifice.

Immolation: The act of immolating; the state of being immolated; a sacrifice.

Impetration: Obtaining a favor by petition, request or entreaty; to entreat request, beseech.

Impetratory: Of or pertaining to obtaining a request by petition; beseeching.

Intercession: The act of interposing or pleading on behalf of a person in difficulty or trouble. Praying to God on behalf of another or others.

Oblation: The act of making an offering, especially the act by which the victim of a sacrifice is offered to God or a false deity. Any offering for religious or charitable uses.

Prayer of Contemplation: That form of prayer which dispenses with reasoning or discourse and distinct ideas of God, concentrating on Him in a simple gaze and a wordless act of love. (Contemplation is a gift of God which cannot be acquired by one's own efforts, even aided by grace.)

Propitiate: To make favorably inclined; to appease, conciliate.

Propitiation: The act of conciliation or propitiation.

Remission: Removal or taking away, as of sins, or of the temporal punishment or “spiritual debt” due to sins after they have already been forgiven. The forgiveness of a debt or other obligation.

Reparation: The making amends for wrong or injury done: atonement, satisfaction, compensation, repair. Reparation for sin is the compensation—by prayer, sacrifice, good works, etc.—made to God for the temporal punishment or “spiritual debt” left over after sin has been forgiven.

Temporal Punishment: Literally “punishment for a time.” This punishment is a type of “spiritual debt” that remains due after sin has been forgiven and that can be paid in this world (by a person in the state of grace) by any prayer, work or sacrifice offered in satisfaction for the debt; or in Purgatory, if not sufficiently paid in this world. By granting “indulgences” for special prayers or spiritual acts performed by her subjects (the other necessary requirements also being present), the Catholic Church has the power by divine right to remit part or all of a person’s temporal punishment out of her Treasury of Merits—gained by Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints.

Vouchsafe: To grant or give, as by favor, graciousness or condescension. Deign. Both “vouchsafe” and “deign” are somewhat archaic words still actively employed by the Church as technical words in her prayers and liturgical translations to reflect God’s condescending action toward mankind in granting favors.

Chapter 1

The Nature of Holy Mass

THE Holy Mass is called in Latin *sacrificium*, a sacrifice, by which word a thing far greater and higher than an offering is signified. A sacrifice, in its full and proper signification, is an offering external to ourselves, made to the most high God and consecrated or hallowed in a solemn manner, by a lawfully appointed and duly qualified minister of the Church, to recognize and testify to the supreme dominion of Almighty God over all creatures. From this definition, it will be seen that a sacrifice is much more than a simple offering. It represents a lofty and sublime act of worship, due to the infinite God alone, and not to any creature.

That this solemn sacrifice may be offered to none other but God alone is proved by St. Augustine from the universal custom of all nations. Who, he says, has ever been found to assert that sacrifice should be offered to anyone save the true God only, or to such false deities as are wrongfully held to be the true God? And in another place he says: The devil would not require sacrifices from his votaries if he did not know this to be a prerogative of the divinity. Many of the great and powerful ones of the earth have arrogated to themselves other acts of homage which are of right paid to God alone, but few indeed have presumed to command

that sacrifice should be offered to them. Those who did this desired to be regarded as gods. Hence it may be seen that the offering of sacrifice is an act of divine worship, which it is not fitting to pay to men, to the Saints or to the Angels, but to God alone.

St. Thomas Aquinas says: "It is natural to mankind to make sacrificial offerings to the omnipotent God, and man is incited thereto by a natural instinct, without an express command or special injunction. This we see exemplified in the case of Abel, Noe, Abraham, Job and other Patriarchs, who offered sacrifice, not in obedience to the law of God, but to the mere impulse of nature. And not only did those persons who were enlightened by God offer sacrifices to Him; the heathen also, simply following the light of nature, sacrificed to their idols, believing them to be true deities. In later times, the law given by God to the children of Israel made it obligatory upon them to offer sacrifice to Him daily; on feasts a more elaborate ceremonial was to be observed. They were to offer to Him lambs, sheep, calves and oxen, and these animals were not to be offered only; they were to be immolated by an anointed priest, with certain prayers and ceremonies. They were to be slaughtered, flayed; their blood was to be poured round about on the altar and their flesh burnt upon the altar, amid the blowing of trumpets and chanting of psalms. These were the sacred oblations whereby the Jews were accustomed to pay to God the homage due to Him and acknowledge Him to be the supreme Ruler over all creatures.

Inasmuch as the idea of sacrifice is so deeply rooted in human nature that all peoples and nations, besides serving God with prayers, hymns, almsgiving and works of

penance, offered some kind of sacrifice whereby they honored the true God—or the false deities they venerated as such—it was fitting, no, it was even necessary, that Christ should institute in His Church a holy and divine oblation as a visible service whereby the faithful should give to God the glory which is His due and express their own subjection to Him. No sensible man could imagine that Christ, who ordained everything in His Church in the most perfect manner, should have omitted this highest act of worship and left it wanting in so all-important a matter. Were it so, the Christian religion would be inferior to Judaism, for the sacrifices of the Old Testament were so glorious that heathens of distinction came from distant lands to assist at them, and some heathen kings, as we read in *II Machabees* (3:3), even paid out of their revenues the charges belonging to the ministry.

The Holy Catholic Church, in the Ecumenical Council of Trent, teaches us what manner of sacrifice or sacred oblation Christ has given to and ordained in His Church:

“For as much as under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood (*Heb.* 7:11, 18), there was need—God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining—that another priest should arise according to the order of Melchisedech, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate and lead to what is perfect as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once on the altar of the Cross unto God the Father by means of His death, there to operate an eternal redemption, nevertheless, because that His priesthood was not to be extinguished by

His death, in the Last Supper on the night in which He was betrayed—that He might leave to His own beloved spouse, the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that Bloody Sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the Cross, might be represented and the memory thereof remain even unto the End of the World and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit—declaring Himself constituted a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, He offered up to God the Father His own Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine; and under the symbols of those same things He delivered His own Body and Blood to be received by His Apostles, whom He then constituted priests of the New Testament, and by those words, ‘Do this for a commemoration of Me’ (*Luke 22:19*), He commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer them, even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught.” (*Session xxii*, Ch. 1).

This and more besides Holy Church teaches us and enjoins upon us to believe, that in the Last Supper Christ did not only change bread and wine into His Body and Blood, He also offered them up to God the Father and thus instituted and ordained in His own person the Sacrifice of the New Covenant. This He did in order to show Himself to be a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, of whom Holy Scripture thus speaks: “Melchisedech, the King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God, and he blessed Abram.” (*Gen. 14:18*). The text does not here expressly state that Melchisedech offered sacrifice to the most high God, but from the first, the Catholic Church has understood this to be

meant, and the fathers have thus expounded it. David himself interprets it thus when he says: "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (*Ps.* 109:4). That both Christ and Melchisedech offered sacrifice is to be inferred from the words of St. Paul writing to the Hebrews: "Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices." (*Heb.* 8:3). "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins." (*Heb.* 5:1). And almost immediately after, he adds: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was. So Christ did not glorify Himself, that He might be made a high priest, but He that said unto Him: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. . . . Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (*Heb.* 5:4-6). And again: "And being consummated, He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation, called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech. Of whom we have much to say, and hard to be intelligibly uttered; because you are become weak to hear." (*Heb.* 5:9-11).

From these passages it is evident that, since Christ and Melchisedech were high priests, they both offered oblations to the true God. Melchisedech did not sacrifice victims, as did Abraham and the earlier adorers of the true God, but acting by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and at variance with the custom of the times, he sanctified bread and wine with certain prayers and rites, raising them aloft and offering them to God as a holy, acceptable offering. Thus he became a type of Jesus Christ and his offering a

type of the bloodless Sacrifice of Jesus Christ under the New Testament. Now, since Christ was not anointed high priest by God the Father according to the order or manner of Aaron, who slaughtered victims, but according to the order of Melchisedech, who presented bread and wine as an oblation, it follows that He also exercised His priestly functions during His lifetime and offered to God an oblation of bread and wine.

When, we ask, did Christ exercise His priestly office according to the order of Melchisedech? At the Last Supper, when He took bread, blessed it, and said to His disciples: "Take ye, and eat: This is My body." (*Matt. 26:26*). In like manner, taking the chalice with wine, He blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood. Do this for a commemoration of Me." (*Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:19*).

On that occasion, therefore, Christ exercised His priestly office after the manner of Melchisedech. For if He did not do so then, He never did so at all throughout His whole life, and in that case, He would not have been a priest according to the order of Melchisedech. And yet, in what exalted language St. Paul describes His priesthood: "The others indeed were made priests without an oath, but this with an oath, by Him that said unto Him: The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a priest forever. . . . But this, for that He continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood." (*Heb. 7:20, 21, 24*). Hence we see the truth of what the Catholic Church teaches in the Council of Trent: "In the Last Supper, He offered up to God the Father His own Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine and commanded His Apostles and their successors

in the priesthood to offer them under these symbols when He said: ‘Do this for a commemoration of Me,’ even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. And this is indeed that clean oblation which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness or malice of those that offer it, which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place clean to His name.” (*Session xxii*, Ch. 1).

The offering of this clean oblation was predicted by the prophet Malachias in the following words: “I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation.” (*Malach. 1:10-11*). All the Fathers of the Church consider this passage to refer to the Sacrifice of the Mass. For this prophecy does not find its fulfillment in the Old Testament, but in the New, wherein also are fulfilled the words which were spoken by God the Father to His Son: “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance.” (*Psa. 2:7-8*). This was accomplished when the heathen were converted to the Faith by the preaching of the Apostles. The sacrifice here predicted by Malachias cannot be that which was offered by Christ on the Cross, as non-Catholics assert; for that was made in one place only, on Calvary, not in every place, as the prophet declares. Nor can the supposition be entertained that the prophecy refers to a sacrifice of praise or of good works, for these are no oblation in the proper sense of the word, nor are they always a “clean oblation;” as the prophet says: “All our justices are before Thee as a filthy rag.” (*Is. 64:6*).

This prophecy is consequently to be understood as expressly referring to the Holy Mass as the one, only and true sacrifice of the New Testament, an oblation in itself perfectly pure and holy, which is offered up to God the Father in all times and in all places by Christ Himself through the instrumentality of His priests. Christ is the chief High Priest; our priests are but His servants, and He makes use of their hands and their lips for the offering of a material sacrifice. It is because Christ in His glorified body is not perceptible to our senses—it being at the same time necessary that there should be a visible victim seen by mortal eyes—that He employs the cooperation of the priest in offering up His Sacrifice. This oblation will continue to be offered until the End of the World.

It is alleged against us as a reproach by non-Catholics that the word Mass is not found in the Bible. This is unquestionably true, but the same may be said of the word Trinity, yet we are bound to believe that sacred mystery. We are not commanded by Holy Scripture to sanctify Sunday or to baptize infants, yet we know both one and the other to be our solemn duty. In the writings of the early Popes and Doctors of the Church, we frequently meet with the word Mass; witness the writings of St. Clement, the third successor of St. Peter, and those of Popes Evaristus and Alexander, who lived in the first century. St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom and other holy Fathers of the Church make use of the word Mass when speaking of the Sacrifice of the New Testament. St. Ambrose writes: “I remained at my post, commenced saying Mass, and during the sacrifice I besought Almighty God to come to our assistance.” St. Augustine says: “We see in the lessons which

are ordered to be read in the Holy Mass,” etc. Both these Doctors of the Church, who lived three hundred years after Christ, employ the word Mass, which shows that it was certainly in common use at that time.

That the Apostles were in the habit of saying Mass we learn from Holy Scripture and the lives of the Apostles. St. Matthew was stabbed at the altar while offering the Holy Sacrifice. Tradition relates of St. Andrew that he said to the judge: “I offer daily to the Almighty God upon the altar, not the flesh of oxen or the blood of goats, but the spotless Lamb of God.” Liturgies for the Mass composed by the Apostles St. James and St. Mark are still extant. The Canon of the Mass is ascribed to St. Peter, and other parts were added by some other holy Popes. From all that has been said, it follows that Mass was celebrated in the Church from the very beginning and that it has at all times been regarded as the True Sacrifice of the New Testament.

THE ATTACKS MADE BY HERETICS UPON THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

The persecutions which the evil enemy has stirred up at various times against the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are a proof how sacred a thing it must be and how obnoxious to the devil; otherwise, he would not attack it with such violence. In the first ten centuries of the Christian Church, teachers of heresy were indeed not wanting, but none of them ventured to assail the Mass; much less did they attempt to do away with it. The heretic Berengarius of Tours was the first who presumed to speak and write against the Holy Mass. His erroneous teaching was exposed

and triumphantly refuted by the Catholic theologians of the day; it was, moreover, condemned by a Council of the Church [Rome–1079]. Before his death, the unhappy man abjured his errors and ended his days as a repentant son of the Catholic Church.

At the commencement of the twelfth century, the impious Albigenses appeared in France; among other disgraceful tenets, they held marriage to be an unlawful state and encouraged profligacy. They did, it is true, take no exception to the celebration of solemn High Mass in the presence of a large assembly of people, but they would not tolerate Low Mass, at which but few persons assisted. In fact, they prohibited them, under pain of fines and imprisonment. In connection with these heretics, Cesar of Heisterbach, who lived about the same time, relates the following incident:

Although the Albigenses had forbidden priests, under heavy penalties, from saying Low Mass, a certain pious priest would not allow himself to be deterred by so unjust a prohibition from saying Mass privately. When this became known, he was arrested and brought before the council, who said to him: “Information has reached us that, in defiance of our prohibition, you have said a Low Mass and committed a grave offense; we have therefore caused you to be brought before us to answer for yourself whether it is so.” The priest instantly replied without any sign of fear: “I will answer in the words of the holy Apostles, who said, when it was inquired of them before the Jewish Council whether they had violated the law by preaching in the name of Christ, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ (*Acts* 5:29). For this reason, therefore, in spite of your unjust prohibition, I said Mass to the honor of God and of His

blessed Mother.” The judges, greatly infuriated by this bold reply, condemned the pious priest to have his tongue torn out in the presence of all the people. The priest suffered this cruel sentence with the utmost patience; he went straight to the church, his mouth yet bleeding, and kneeling humbly before the altar at which he had said Mass, poured out his complaint to the Mother of God. Being unable any longer to speak with his tongue, he raised his heart to her with all the more fervor, entreating her that his tongue might be restored to him. So urgent was his supplication that the Blessed Mother of God appeared to him and with her own hand replaced his tongue in his mouth, saying that it was given back to him for the sake of the honor he had paid to God the Lord and to her by saying Mass, and exhorting him diligently to make use of it in that manner for the future. After returning heartfelt thanks to his benefactress, the priest returned to the assembled people and showed them that his tongue had been given back to him, thus putting to confusion the obstinate heretics and all who had displayed hostility to the Holy Mass.

The words of the blessed Father Cesar, in the preface to the little book whence this story is taken, allow of no doubt as to its truth. “I take God to witness,” he says, “that I have inserted nothing in this work but what I have seen with my own eyes or heard from the lips of men who would sooner die than utter a falsehood.” Wherefore this true story ought to convince all who think otherwise that the Holy Mass is especially pleasing to the most high God.

From the days of the Apostles until the present time, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has had no more vehement opponent than the unhappy Martin Luther, who not only

attacked, but denounced this divine mystery. He did not do this of himself, nor when he first apostatized, but at a later period, and at the instigation of the devil. In fact, the deluded man himself acknowledges in his writings that his teaching comes from the devil, and only at the suggestion of the evil one has he abolished the Mass as “an act of idolatry,” although he must have known full well that the devil is the hater of all that is good and teaches mankind naught but what is evil. Besides, Luther might have considered that, if the Mass were idolatrous, the devil would not oppose it, much less desire that it should be done away with; on the contrary, he would promote it and praise it, because the more Masses were said, the more acts of idolatry would be committed and the greater dishonor would be done to the most high God.

In this wise Satan has deprived, not the Lutherans only, but all the Protestant sects that have arisen after him, of the salutary Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, and thereby has done them an irreparable injury. In fact, he has made this sublime mystery so repugnant to them that they declare it to be a denial of the Sacrifice of the Cross and an accursed worshipping of idols, as we read in the Heidelberg catechism of the Calvinists. Such horrible profanity is enough to fill every pious heart with dread and cause every good Christian to stop his ears. We will not devote much time to the refutation of such blasphemies; one argument will suffice to overthrow them.

If these heretical doctrines were true, it would follow as a matter of course that, from the time of Christ, no single person, not even were he an Apostle or a martyr, could have been saved. The holy Apostles and all their successors

in the priesthood celebrated and offered to the Most High God the Sacrifice of the Mass; all holy martyrs and confessors heard Mass devoutly and regarded it as the highest act of divine service. Now, if the Holy Mass were idolatrous and a denial of the One Sacrifice of Christ, the holy Apostles and all the Faithful would have been guilty of idolatry; they would have grievously offended the Divine Majesty and rendered themselves worthy of eternal damnation. And since no person of any sense will credit such an assertion, no one can believe the Calvinistic teaching to be true. Rather than to Calvin and Luther, let us listen to St. Fulgentius [468-533] when he says: "Hold fast the doctrine and never permit yourself to doubt that the only-begotten Son of God became man for us and for us offered Himself to Almighty God, to whom the Catholic Church throughout the world now offers in faith and charity unceasingly the Oblation of Bread and Wine." Who is most worthy of our belief—a holy and enlightened teacher of the Church, or two apostates such as Calvin and Luther?

To these latter one may apply the words addressed by the learned Peter of Cluny to some other heretics: "If your teaching were universally accepted, that is, if Christians were to abolish the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that would come to pass in this season of grace which never came to pass in the season of wrath: God would no longer be worshipped upon earth. Therefore, O ye enemies of God, listen when the Church of God tells you that a Divine Sacrifice is essential to her existence and that in this Sacrifice she offers the Body and Blood of the Saviour and that alone; and what He did in His death, that she does whenever this offering is made." Such are the words of the aforesaid father.

Let us therefore beware lest the same thing befall us that befell the unhappy heretics. For the evil one robbed them of the Holy Mass to their unspeakable injury; but us Catholics, since he could not succeed in depriving us of it, he blinded in great measure so that we might not fully appreciate the magnitude of this Holy Sacrifice and its immense potency. Doubtless it was due to Satan's devices that, for a considerable period, this Divine Mystery was so seldom made the subject of sermons that so little was said or written respecting it—and thus Catholics became careless about hearing Mass, or heard it indevoutly.

As a means of preventing this evil, the Council of Trent commanded those who had the care of souls frequently to preach about the Holy Mass. The decree is as follows: "The holy synod charges pastors and all who have the care of souls that they frequently during the celebration of Mass expound, either themselves or by others, some portion of those things which are read at Mass; and that, among the rest, they explain some mystery of this Most Holy Sacrifice, especially on the Lord's days and festivals." (*Session xxii, Ch. 8*). If the people are ignorant of the great value of Holy Mass, they do not love and esteem it as they ought; they never go to Mass on weekdays, and on Sundays and holy days they are too often indifferent, irreverent, superficial; they absent themselves on a mere pretext and without the slightest scruple of conscience.

But if they understand the vast efficacy and value of the Holy Mass, they cannot fail to prize more highly this costly treasure, to love it more deeply and to assist at the Divine Oblation with greater reverence. There is in the Catholic Church no mystery more important, more consoling, more

salutary, than this Sublime Mystery of the Altar. If this truth were recognized correctly, we should certainly see a larger attendance at Mass on weekdays.