

THE LATIN MASS EXPLAINED

*“This is My body, which is
given for you.” —Luke 22:19*

THE LATIN MASS EXPLAINED

Msgr. George J. Moorman

Foreword by

Msgr. R. Michael Schmitz

VICAR GENERAL, INSTITUTE OF CHRIST THE KING SOVEREIGN PRIEST

Introibo ad altare Dei.

Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.

I will go unto the altar of God.

To God, Who giveth joy to my youth.

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The Prophecy of Malachias

“**F**OR 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: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”

—*Malachias* 1:11

Foreword

By Msgr. R. Michael Schmitz

FREEDOM is one of the greatest gifts the Almighty has bestowed on man. Through this gift, we are really formed to His image, because among all earthly creatures He gives us the unique opportunity to embrace His will freely, to accept it, and to make it fully ours. The wealth of possibilities this capacity opens to everyone is unfathomable, and it is for this gift that man has been rightly called the crown of creation.

Holy Mother Church is a reflex of this freedom because she is the continuation of the Mystery of the Incarnation and Salvation in this world. Through her, the Redeemer not only re-creates our lost freedom by taking away the slavery of sin, but also blesses us with unending graces to secure a true life of freedom for those of good will. This liberality of God is visible in the liberality of Holy Mother Church, who gratifies her children with all the riches one needs to survive in this poor and spiritually starving world.

Thus, it would seem unnatural to this generous Mother to withhold from us the treasures of beauty and wisdom which, throughout the centuries, have led innumerable of her children to the glory of Heaven. Pope Benedict XVI underscores this truth in the introduction of his Apostolic letter *Summorum Pontificum*: “It is known, in fact, that the Latin liturgy of the

Church in its various forms, in each century of the Christian era, has been a spur to the spiritual life of many saints, has reinforced many peoples in the virtue of religion and fecundated their piety.”

Consequently, the freedom of grace of the children of God postulates, from the motherly generosity of the Church, that present and future generations of the faithful should have free and large access to the fullness of the liturgical forms the Holy Ghost has created as an appropriate expression of the glorification that the whole Mystical Body of Christ owes constantly to the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of the human race.

Providentially, therefore, and with a gesture of loving largesse after the example of the heavenly Father, the visible Father of Christianity has granted *motu proprio*, of his own initiative, a decree that throws the doors of the liturgical treasury of the Latin Church again wide open for clergy and laity alike. The Holy Father appeals to the wisdom and charity of the Bishops to understand and implement his disposition, which is meant to be a sign of reconciliation inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church. In this intent, it has already borne fruit and received praise and recognition worldwide.

Freedom needs guidance. The liturgical richness of the extraordinary form of the Latin Rite shows in many ways that the sacramental mysteries instituted by Christ are a beginning of the eternal freedom and a glimpse of the glory of Heaven. Hence, in these lands of shadow and sinfulness where human frailty finds a path to the light with great difficulty, Holy Mother Church, under the direction of continuous inspiration from above, has organically developed forms and details

to guide our steps to a divine worship that guarantees our contact with the Godhead and at the same time elevates our soul and body to a genuine piety nourished by the grace of Christ.

This is exactly where books like the present one come to play an important role. At all times, the Church has invited both her priests and all her faithful to love and cherish her liturgy. The clergy especially need to have a profound knowledge of the mysteries of which they are called to be the faithful ministers. Those among the laity, however, who have wanted to follow more closely the universal call to holiness have likewise been interested in deepening their knowledge about the theological and ceremonial meaning of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Thus, many approved authors, at different times and under various aspects, have explained the liturgical life of the Church with great expertise. Among the more important were Durandus a Mende, the holy Cardinal Tommasi di Lampedusa, Blessed Dom Marmion, Blessed Cardinal Schuster, the Fathers Sterky, Fortescue, Eisenhofer and Gihl—and many others could be mentioned.

Today, knowledge of the *extraordinary form* of the Latin Rite is not widely spread. Pope Benedict XVI has pointed to the reality of the lack of a general liturgical formation in the letter to the Bishops issued together with the *motu proprio* about the classical liturgy: “The use of the old Missal presupposes a certain degree of liturgical formation and some knowledge of the Latin language; neither of these is found very often.” While many of the young clergy and many lay youth are deeply impressed by the classical liturgy which they may happen to discover, few have teachers or literature at hand to be instructed in order to

understand even better what they already admire.

The re-publication of an introduction to what is today often called the “Latin Mass” or the “Traditional Latin Mass” is therefore not only most timely, but fills to some extent a gap which needs to be closed at many levels. The present work by Monsignor George J. Moorman, in his time a well-known liturgical scholar with long practical experience, on the one hand contains much detailed explanation of the individual ceremonies and rubrics, but, on the other, remains accessible and clear so that those unfamiliar with the extraordinary form can use the book with profit.

The passages about the theological sense of the concept of sacrifice, the justification of the use of the Latin language, the description of the liturgical vestments and vessels, and the detailed, step by step elucidation of all parts of the Holy Mass, to mention only a few of the many elements of Monsignor Moorman’s work, will be most useful to all who want to understand better what happens at the Altar. However, all who desire a more profound faith in the Mystery and the ability to convey their own conviction to others will likewise appreciate the present treatise. While a book like this, given its age and its more general approach, cannot easily embrace all theological and liturgical facts and opinions, and may thus present here and there a more local or personal viewpoint not accepted by all traditional liturgists, it constitutes without doubt a good introduction into the rite of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and will be for many a solid base for further studies.

The lay people who read this book may wish to share it with their pastors and their friends among both the older and younger clergy. It should be in the hands of

interested seminarians and of altar servers. It will be part of the liturgical revival which the Church so ardently hopes for through the voice of the Roman Pontiff. The liturgy it explains was “never juridically abrogated” and “. . . the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V and reissued by Blessed John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same ‘Lex orandi,’ and must be given due honor for its venerable and ancient usage.” The more this extraordinary source of liturgical awe is set free for all, the more it will inspire the liturgical life of the Church. One step toward this freedom, springing from knowledge and love, will be this new edition of the notable work of Monsignor George J. Moorman.

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Author's Introduction

TO Catholics familiar with the Traditional Latin Mass, nothing is more sacred than the Mass. To a person not familiar with the Latin Mass, nothing is more mystifying. “What is going on at the altar?” he asks. It is something so different from everything we meet with in our daily life: the vestments, the altar, the burning candles, the tinkle of the bell, the singing, the language, the ceremonies, the whispered prayers, the awe and reverence of the congregation—what does it all mean?

To those inclined to ridicule, we would advise the reading of Mr. Augustine Birrell's (Protestant) testimony in the *Nineteenth Century* (April, 1896): “There is much that is touching and forlorn in the spectacle of the English Roman Catholic no longer able to adore his Risen Lord in any one of those stately mother-churches built by the piety and still instinct with the genius of his ancestors, or to hear within their walls the tinkle of that bell, a sound carrying with it a richer freight of religious association than any other sound or incident in Christian worship. The Mass is a tremendous mystery, so profoundly attractive, so intimately associated with the keystone of the Christian faith, so vouched for by the testimony of Saints! Nobody today, save a handful of vulgar fanatics, speaks irreverently of the Mass. If the Incarnation be indeed the one divine event to which the whole creation moves, the miracle

of the altar may well seem its restful shadow, over a dry and thirsty land, for the help of man, who is apt to be discouraged if perpetually told that everything really important and interesting happened once for all, long ago, in the chill, historic past."

Before entering into an explanation of this great religious ceremony, we feel constrained to give our readers that beautiful picture of the Mass drawn by the pen of Cardinal Newman, who himself was a convert to the Catholic Church:

"Nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass, said as it is among us. I could attend Masses forever and not be tired. It is not a mere form of words—it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth. It is not the invocation merely, but, if I dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. He becomes present on the altar in flesh and blood, before Whom angels bow and devils tremble. This is that awful event which is the scope, and is the interpretation, of every part of the solemnity.

"Words are necessary, but as means, not as ends; they are not mere addresses to the throne of grace, they are instruments of what is far higher, of consecration, of sacrifice. They hurry on as if impatient to fulfill their mission. Quickly they go; for they are awful words of sacrifice, they are a work too great to delay upon; as when it was said in the beginning: 'What thou doest, do quickly.' Quickly they pass; for the Lord Jesus goes with them, as He passed along the lake in the days of His flesh, quickly calling first one and then another. Quickly they pass; because as the lightning which shineth from one part of Heaven unto the other, so is the coming of the Son of Man. Quickly they pass;

for they are as the words of Moses, when the Lord came down in the cloud, calling on the Name of the Lord as He passed by, 'The Lord, the Lord God, and abundant in goodness and truth.' And as Moses on the mountain, so we too make haste and bow our heads to the earth, and adore.

"So we, all around, each in his place, look out for the great Advent, 'waiting for the moving of the water.' Each in his place, with his own heart, with his own wants, with his own thoughts, with his own intentions, with his own prayers, separate but concordant, watching what is going on, watching its progress, uniting in its consummation—not painfully and hopelessly following a hard form of prayer from beginning to end, but like a concert of musical instruments, each different, but concurring in a sweet harmony, we take our part with God's priest, supporting him, yet guided by him. There are little children there, and old men, and simple laborers, and students in seminaries, priests preparing for Mass, priests making their thanksgiving; there are innocent maidens, and there are penitent sinners; but out of these many minds rises one eucharistic hymn, and the great Action is the measure and the scope of it." (From *Loss and Gain*).

What poetry, what pathos, what sublimity in the teachings of our Faith! The human mind, left to its own imaginings, has devised nothing comparable to it. If it could be a mere delusion that inspired the liturgies, the cathedrals, the compositions of Palestrina and all the rest—still more, that sustained the martyrs, the tempted, the suffering, the poor, the dying, as the Eucharistic Sacrifice has done; that inspired such lives as those of St. Francis, St. Teresa, and many a hidden

saint in the cloister and in the world; and deaths as those of St. Tarcisius and thousands of Christian deathbeds everywhere all the world over, which are manifestly sustained by the power of the Viaticum—if all this were the result of a mistake, what a magnificent mistake!

But when we recall the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, the accounts of the Last Supper, especially that by which St. Paul makes his solitary intrusion into the office of Evangelist, and when we think of the place which the Mass has occupied in the tradition and literature and practical life of the Church, no docile Christian mind could escape the conviction that such a mistake is impossible and that nowhere would the daring words of Richard of St. Victor be more applicable than in this impossible hypothesis: "Lord, if there be a mistake, by Thee we are deceived."

But no! The command was given by the Master: "Do this for a commemoration of me." The Mass is the fulfillment of this command. Every Catholic should strive to become familiar with the principal ceremonies and prayers of the Mass so that he may assist at this sublime function with keener interest and greater fervor.

—Msgr. George J. Moorman

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THE LATIN MASS EXPLAINED

“Et antiquum documentum novo cedit ritui.”

“The ancient form [of sacrifice]
yields to the new Rite [the Mass].”

—From the *Tantum Ergo*

PART ONE

**The Teaching of the Church
On the Sacrifice
Of the Mass**

Chapter 1

The Nature of Sacrifice

The Significance of Sacrifice

When we speak of the **Mass** we usually associate it with **Sacrifice** and speak of it as the **Sacrifice of the Mass**.

The word **sacrifice** is derived from the two Latin words, **sacer**, meaning “sacred,” and **facere**, “to make.” The words “to sacrifice,” as quite commonly used, mean to offer something valuable to a person as a token of affection for, or dependence on, that person. If a father gives all he has to enable his children to receive a good education, and himself lives in straitened circumstances, he is said to make a great sacrifice for his children. When a soldier leaves home and country to battle for the defense of his country at the risk of his life and limb, he is said to sacrifice himself for his country. The young missionary who leaves his native land and the comforts of home to preach the Gospel in foreign lands to hostile people is spoken of as making a great sacrifice. And rightly so, for when wealth and life and that which we hold dear are given for a noble purpose, they are rendered sacred.

In this same sense our offerings made to God may be called **sacrifices**. The poor widow who, out of love for God, cast into the treasury her last mite, made a great sacrifice for God’s sake.

It is man's duty to **honor** his fellow men. Some among them—for example, parents, teachers and superiors—must be honored in a special manner. This honor may be shown **interiorly** by respecting them, thinking well of them; but these sentiments are given outward expression—for example, by saluting them, speaking well of them—and thus we show them **exterior** honor. But when we wish to honor a person in a particular manner we offer him a gift, or make him a present. Thus, in the days of feudalism, when the lord visited his domains, the inhabitants offered him presents in order to testify that they acknowledged him as their master. They honored him as their lord.

But God is our **Supreme Lord**. We belong to Him with body and soul. We are subject to Him in all things. Hence, we must give greater honor to God than to all men. We honor God **interiorly** by thinking reverently of Him, by submitting ourselves to Him. We honor God **exteriorly** by showing our reverence and submission outwardly, for example, by words, prayers, etc. If we show respect even toward men not only by word, but especially by visible gifts, how much more should we also honor by gifts God, Who is the Author of our being, to Whom belong Heaven and earth and all things!

Sacrifice as an Act of Divine Worship

There is, however, a wide difference in the manner in which we offer a gift to man and to God. By offering gifts to men, we do not pay them the same honor which we pay to God. When we offer God a gift, we recognize Him as our Supreme Master, to Whom we belong entirely; we do Him the greatest honor—we **adore** Him. The gifts which we offer to men are sim-

ply **presented**, but the gifts which we offer to God are **destroyed**. The destruction of the object renders its recovery impossible.

When, of old, the Jews offered a lamb, they brought it to the Temple; then it was slaughtered by the priest, the blood was spilled, and the dead animal was burned. If the offerer had merely **given** the lamb, he would have declared only: "The lamb belongs to God; and not only the lamb, but **all that I possess**, I have from God, and I would give it to Him if He desired it." By the **killing and burning** of the lamb another sentiment is expressed: "God is Master over the life and death of this lamb, over the **life and death of all creatures**, and also over my life. I ought, properly speaking, to give up my life to God; but as God does not demand this, I now give Him, instead of my life, the life of this lamb, and thus show that I am ready, if He so desires, to give up also my life for Him."

As the gifts, or sacrifices, which we offer to God confer the highest honor and are signs of **adoration**, such sacrifices can be offered only to God.

Religious Sacrifice Honors God as God

What, then, is a sacrifice in the sense of divine worship? **A sacrifice is that highest act of religion in which a duly authorized person offers to God some sensible* thing which is visibly immolated,** either physically or mystically, in acknowledgment of God's dominion over all things and of our total dependence on Him.**

He who sacrifices is called a **priest**; the sensible

* Sensible—perceptible to the senses.

** Immolated—killed as a sacrificial victim.

thing which is sacrificed is called the **victim**; the place where it is sacrificed is the **altar**. These four—**priest, victim, altar, and sacrifice**—are inseparable. Each one of them calls for the others.

The intention of a sacrifice may be to give honor to God, to give thanks to Him, to ask a favor, or to make atonement. The offering of a sacrifice gives outward expression to the sentiments of the heart. The man who has a due knowledge of God will be filled with sentiments of respect, of gratitude, of confidence, and of contrition. Since it is part of man's nature to manifest outwardly what he feels inwardly, he will give expression to these sentiments by the offering of some object that he values. If he who offers a sacrifice has no other purpose than to honor God, we call this a **sacrifice of praise**. But if, besides this object, he has the particular intention to thank God, he offers a **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. When the offerer wishes anything particular from God, he offers a **sacrifice of petition**. If he wishes to pacify God, Whom he has offended by sin, he offers a **sacrifice of atonement**.

The man who believes in God understands perfectly that he is bound in conscience to spend his life in serving God, nay, that God is worthy even to be honored by the sacrifice of his life. Man gives expression to these sentiments of the heart by offering sacrifice. For the sacrifice of his own life, he substitutes the offering of other sensible objects. By destroying or otherwise changing them, he acknowledges by this destruction or change of sensible things that God is Sovereign Master of life and death; he states that, were God to require it, he would be willing even to sacrifice his own life in order thus to render Him an honor and homage of which He alone is worthy.

Sacrifice Answers the Craving of Human Nature

Sacrifice is the highest form of religious worship. It is the outward expression of man's entire dependence upon God. This absolute dependence of man upon his Creator is expressed in the destruction, or change, of the thing offered. Without this **destruction**, or **change**, it would seem that man did not fittingly express his interior acknowledgement that God was the Sovereign Master of life and death and, as such, worthy even of being honored by the sacrifice of man's life, were He to require it.

Man instinctively manifests his inward feelings by words and actions. The child, already at a tender age, shows its attachment and affection for its mother by outward signs. The highest, holiest, noblest and strongest sentiments of the soul conscious of its relations to God are those of the supreme adoration due to Him. Now the only outward sign which represents these sentiments of itself is **sacrifice**. Every other outward rite or act of religion may of itself be used to manifest the lower reverence paid to creatures as well as the high worship which is God's inalienable right. We may bow, kneel, prostrate ourselves before creatures, as the subject in the Orient does before the monarch's throne. We may burn incense, as did the Jewish priests before the ark of the covenant, or utter "the harmony of sweet sounds" in honor of the Saints and Angels. Take away sacrifice, and religious worship has no outward sign which by itself expresses those high sentiments toward the Ruler of the Universe which are the most obligatory on mankind.