

The Eucharist and the Mystery of the Trinity

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The Blessed Trinity's love for man is made permanent in a sublime way through the Eucharist. Many years ago, we all learned from our catechism that the Eucharist can be considered as a sacrifice and as a

sacrament; and that the sacrament is present to us both in communion and as a treasure on the altar, in the tabernacle. The Church dedicates another feast to the eucharistic mystery—the feast of the body of Christ, Corpus Christi, present in all the tabernacles of the world. Today, on Holy Thursday, we can turn our attention to the holy Eucharist as our sacrifice and as our nourishment, in the holy Mass and in communion.

I was talking to you about the love of the Blessed Trinity for man. And where can we see this more clearly than in the Mass? The three divine Persons act together in the holy sacrifice of the altar. This is why I like to repeat the final words of the collect, secret and postcommunion: “Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,” we pray to God the Father, “who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”

In the Mass, our prayer to God the Father is constant. The priest represents the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, who is, at the same time, the victim offered in this sacrifice. And the action of the Holy Spirit in the Mass is truly present, although in a mysterious manner. “By the power of the Holy Spirit,” writes St John Damascene, “the transformation of the bread into the body of Christ takes place.”

The action of the Holy Spirit is clearly expressed when the priest invokes the divine blessing on the offerings: “Come, Sanctifier, almighty and eternal God, and bless this sacrifice prepared in honour of your holy name” — the holocaust that will give to the holy name of God the glory that is due. The sanctification we pray for is attributed to the Paraclete, who is sent to us by the Father and the Son. And we also recognize the active presence of the

Holy Spirit in this sacrifice, as we say, shortly before communion: “Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, by your death have brought life to the world...”

The three divine Persons are present in the sacrifice of the altar. By the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the Son offers himself in a redemptive sacrifice. We learn how to personalise our relationship with the most Blessed Trinity, one God in three Persons: three divine Persons in the unity of God’s substance, in the unity of his love and of his sanctifying action.

Immediately after the Lavabo, the priest prays: “Receive, Holy Trinity, this offering that we make in memory of the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And, at the end of the Mass,

there is another prayer of homage to the Trinity of God: “*Placeat tibi, Sancta Trinitas, obsequium servitutis meae...* May the tribute of my service be pleasing to you, o Holy Trinity; and grant the sacrifice that I, who am unworthy, have offered to your majesty, may be acceptable to you; and that through your mercy it may bring forgiveness to me and to all those for whom I have offered it.”

The Mass is, I insist, an action of God, of the Trinity. It is not a merely human event. The priest who celebrates fulfils the desire of our Lord, lending his body and his voice to the divine action. He acts, not in his own name, but *in persona et in nomine Christi*: in the Person of Christ and in his name.

Because of the Blessed Trinity’s love for man, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist brings all graces to the Church and to mankind. This is the sacrifice announced by the prophet

Malachy: “From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and a fragrant sacrifice and a pure offering is made to me in all places.” It is the sacrifice of Christ, offered to the Father with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit—an offering of infinite value, which perpetuates the work of the redemption in us and surpasses the sacrifices of the old law.

The Holy Mass brings us face to face with one of the central mysteries of our faith, because it is the gift of the Blessed Trinity to the Church. It is because of this that we can consider the Mass as the centre and the source of a Christian’s spiritual life.

It is the aim of all the sacraments. The life of grace, into which we are brought by baptism, and which is increased and strengthened by confirmation, grows to its fullness in the Mass. “When we participate in

the Eucharist,” writes St Cyril of Jerusalem, “we are made spiritual by the divinizing action of the Holy Spirit, who not only makes us share in Christ’s life, as in baptism, but makes us entirely Christ-like, incorporating us into the fullness of Christ Jesus.”

This pouring out of the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and makes us acknowledge that we are children of God. The Paraclete, who is Love, teaches us to saturate our life with the virtue of charity. Thus *consummati in unum*: “made one with Christ,” we can be among men what the Eucharist is for us, in the words of St Augustine: “a sign of unity, a bond of love.”

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