The Meaning of the Roman Catholic Mass

Meal or Sacrifice?

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To all of my teachers, every single one of them from pre-school to college, but most of all to the first teachers who taught me values, respect, love, and faith: my parents,

Juan Carlos Bautista and Maricela Bautista

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Abstract

The Roman Catholic Mass is essential to the life of a Catholic. The Mass is where the bread and wine is consecrated into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Mass is where everyone gathers together to celebrate the mysteries of the faith. The question is, what is the mass? There are two ways in which the Mass can be talked about and described as, and these ways are the Mass as meal and the Mass as sacrifice. This project’s purpose is to unpack these two ideas by comparing and contrasting two different books that contain the rites and prayers of the Mass, the *1962 Missale Romanum* and the *Roman Missal: Third Edition*. Additionally, the project draws from the Hispanic culture, my own experiences in the liturgy, and how four different parishes in the City of Chicago have embraced either theology or both theologies.
I began my faith journey when I was in 2nd grade at St. Agnes of Bohemia Elementary Catholic School. It was the beginning of the year, and my class and I were being taken to the first all school Mass of the year. Growing up, I’ve grown up with terms such as “Diosito,” “Papa, Papa,” “misa,” “miercoles de ceniza,” and “domingo de ramos.” When my teachers and the priest started using terms like “mass,” “Palm Sunday,” “I believe in one God,” and “It is right to give thanks and praise,” honestly, it was a very confusing time for me because I only had the opportunity to learn these terms in Spanish. In addition, I continuously kept hearing the word, God. I remember asking one of my classmates, “What is God?” He responded with an alarming tone, “He’s right over there in that big golden box behind that big table,” he said. I wondered to myself, “How could he be in that big golden box? A man like Jesus couldn’t fit in there, it’s too small.” Yet, during Mass, I saw the priest opening up that small golden box and took out a small container called a ciborium, and he placed it on the table called an altar. The entire assembly kneels, and the priest says, “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.” I was in awe because during the time I was in school, we were taught that Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist in the form of a host (which later I learned that the bread and wine have been consecrated into the body and blood of Christ). We were also being prepared to receive our First Communion that year. When I saw the priest lifting up Jesus like that, I felt a tremble in my body. It felt like someone big was filling up the emptiness of my heart, and that his presence was being known to not only all, but me in particular because God calls each of us by name. When I received Jesus for the first time later in
the year, my whole heart sank, and I felt as if Jesus was celebrating, jumping up and down, and filling my heart with joy. Plus, my heart became complete once I consumed the Eucharist.

Whenever I look back at this event, I see a sacrifice. The movies my dad would usually put on about the life of Jesus, and the countless times I prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet with the help of a special video my parents had, had helped me to formulate my idea of Jesus being sacrificed for all of humanity on the cross. It is an image that has brought me and my sister to tears, and it is an image that I always bring up myself in my mind every Sunday at Mass.

The community I grew up with is a very special community because they have helped me to see a different reality. When I began my studies at St. Agnes of Bohemia School, the community was half Anglo and half Hispanic with a slow growth rate for the Hispanic community. As time passed, the Anglo community seemed to have either passed on or moved to a different part of the city, state, country, or world. The Hispanic community grew to an outstanding 95% of the population. The other 5% were made up of teachers who taught at the school. The Hispanic community loved to be with each other 24/7. For example, instead of having a single Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12th of December, they began the “docenario” tradition which is a period of twelve days when parishioners can attend Mass at 5:00 am starting on December 1 until the 12th in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. On the Feast of Our Lady, parishioners would go as far as keeping the night of the 11th a vigil night. In other words, it is a night in which the church is filled up. The community would pray the rosary, perform the “apariciones guadalupanas” (a reenactment of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe), sing to the virgin, perform traditional indigenous dances, and stay up all night until the conclusion of the 5:00 am Mass on the morning of the 12th. Most of the people who filled up
the seats on these days would not be seen again until the next major Hispanic festivity, February 2nd. However, I saw something in these events that really mattered so much. It wasn’t until I began to study at Dominican University that I began to understand what mattered so much. That was the community, life experiences, and “la lucha.” These people didn’t see these different devotions or the Mass itself as a sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, but it felt to them as if it were a meal, a community gathering, and a place in which everyone felt welcomed. Although there were rules, the code of canon law needed to be followed, and the rubrics of the *Roman Missal* needed to be fulfilled. These people cared more about each other than the rules, and that is what I admire about them.

Over the years since I began my studies at St. Agnes, my faith has grown tremendously. My thirst for knowledge of the liturgy increased, and that isn't just because I wanted to know more, but because of very difficult experiences I lived through. I began to grow interested in the liturgy when I saw some kids up at the sanctuary helping the priest. I said to myself, “I want to help the priest too! I want to be part of that group of young kids. A religious sister from the congregation of the Daughters of St. Pius X would come into my classroom once a week to teach us mini-religious classes. In addition, she was also the coordinator of that group I wanted to join. She gladly accepted me into the group, and helped me to fit in with the rest of the kids by training me, showing me the different objects the kids carry and use, and by explaining to me the many symbols and signs of these different objects that gave meaning to the Liturgy.

My parents were not the type of parents who often attend mass or planted the seed of faith in my heart at the beginning. On weekends, Our family usually would go to family gatherings and parties instead of attending Sunday Mass. When I told my parents that I had
signed myself up to be an altar server, the look they had on their faces had no words to describe it. They were in a state of shock, as if the world had ended. Because of me joining the altar servers, my parents had to take me and attend Mass every week. From the first Mass that I served, my family became closer and closer to the faith. Attendance to family reunions and parties shrunk to a low number, and we began to focus on our faith and different responsibilities that we later would obtain, such as my dad becoming a lector, my mom an extraordinary minister of communion, and my sister an altar server with me. Today, I can sadly say that altar serving for me ended in 2016, but I continue serving in Mass as an extraordinary minister of communion. However, since the time I joined, I had some major bumps along the way because I had to deal with seminarians, priests, and lay people who would abuse their power to implement abuses within the liturgical ministry. These different abuses would hurt the people in various ministries, and it would affect me in particular. Priests and seminarians would tell me, “Don’t ring the bells like that, it’s too loud!”, “The book says that the Mass should go this way or that way!”, or “The way you are swinging the thurible is wrong! This is how you should do it!”

It became annoying to continuously having to listen to these people talk to me and the others in a tyrannical way. I mean, what really is the correct way? Fortunately, I also came to know very good people who would show me these different books and manuals. As I read one by one, I became enraged at how people would abuse their authority to manipulate others. These certain events caused a spark in my heart and mind to pursue the study of the liturgy because with my studies in liturgy, I would be able to defend anyone who is feeling oppressed or manipulated by those who “know more.” What helped in my journey towards understanding the liturgy is studying at Dominican University. While I learned how the liturgy should properly be
celebrated and looked at, I came to realize that with everyone’s culture and life experiences the
Mass is more beautiful and eschatologically wonderful than using just rubrics themselves. The
people’s “lucha” (or struggle) is what brings them closer to the mass. While at Mass, they see
Jesus being sacrificed on the altar or they can see the community sharing the meal to celebrate
life like we, the Hispanic/Latino culture, always do.

Which theology of the liturgy seems easier to understand? Is looking at the Mass as a
meal or as a sacrifice more understandable? Taking a closer look at these two reveals two
different realities and one ultimate reality. The two different realities are that the Mass is the
celebration in which the priest acts in persona Christi who sacrifices the Lamb on the altar, and
the other is that the Mass is a celebration of life itself where people come to gather to engage in
dialogue and create community with each other ultimately giving thanks to God for everything
they receive each week whether it is food, work, health, etc. The one ultimate reality of the Mass
is that both are needed in order to fully know who God is and know that the Mass is both meal
and sacrifice that the community can participate in. That way, we are filled with the food we
need for the journey to preach the good news, and we are reminded that God is with us and wants
us to one day be at his side in the transcendental life.

Questions that I am asking to keep in mind are: Do practices in the Mass suppose to show
a more traditional aspect as the Lamb itself is being sacrificed on the altar, or do practices in the
mass suppose to show an open community where Catholics, non-Catholics, non-Christians, and
non-believers are gathered together to engage in dialogue and create a vibrant community of
believers in Christ? Is the Mass just a meal or is it just a sacrifice? Does the Mass need to be
respected by performing the rites in a more traditional way or does the Mass need to be celebrated as a response to ecumenism?
**PARTS OF THE CHURCH AND THE TWO DIFFERENT LITURGICAL THEOLOGIES**

I had an opportunity to visit a few parishes in Chicago for the sake of testing my arguments regarding the question of whether the Mass is a meal or sacrifice. Let’s explore these parishes before talking about the Order of the Mass and the two different liturgical theologies of the Mass as meal and sacrifice. The parishes I visited are Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish, St. Agnes of Bohemia Parish, St. Odilo Parish, and St. John Cantius Parish. Three of these parishes is where I either grew up in or worked at.

St. Agnes of Bohemia is my home parish, and where I grew up for the majority of my life. I was an altar server, catechist, and peer minister in my youth group there. My parish was once a Slovak-dominated parish since its founding, but today it is the Hispanic community that fully dominates this parish. In 1904, the parish was founded as Blessed Agnes of Bohemia, and it was built in the form of a Pre-Vatican II church. In other words, an altar rail was built along the steps to the sanctuary to separate the congregation from the holy priests celebrating Mass in order to prevent, as a professor once taught me about how Pre-Vatican II churches were built, “the purity of the Mass to be infected with the sin of the world.” Now as time passed, my parish grew in size of community, and the church was expanded with a balcony that was built in the back of the church. The rail is removed after Vatican II, and one can see an image of where the rails used to be (see appendix C under “St. Agnes of Bohemia Parish.”) The Slovak community began to diminish when my parents arrived here from Mexico, and once I began my ministry at my parish, they either died off or left to another community.

My home parish isn’t your typical Hispanic parish with traditional guitars, marimba, or upbeat sounds. My home parish embraces both theologies of meal and sacrifice for Mass. The
music involves guitars, bass, drums, violin, trumpets, and at times flutes were even used. The liturgy itself is very traditional with a lot of exceptions that come in from time to time. Feasts and Solemnities are all traditionally celebrated following the rubrics of the Roman Missal. However, at times to celebrate heritage and Hispanic life, the Mexican Folkloric dance group would often perform during Mass. My parish isn't big, but it isn't small either. It’s my home, and I wouldn't pick any other parish as my home.

The only memories I have of Our Lady of Tepeyac parish are of creating community with each other’s youth groups there, and participating in one of the Masses during the novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Our Lady of Tepeyac is not your usual parish because in everyone’s mindset, the altar would usually be at the front of the church. As you can see in appendixes A-D under “Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish,” the altar seems to be located right in the middle of the church. This would send signals to visitors and parishioners alike that the parish is formed as a gathering for a meal. The parish is very charismatic, and of course it is your typical Hispanic parish with plenty of Hispanic culture and traditions being implemented into the Mass. The parish was built in the year 1990, so in other words it was built 25 years after Vatican II.

The relationship I have with St. Odilo Parish is quite a short one. I worked at St. Odilo as a Totus Tuus missionary during the summer of 2016. As a Totus Tuus missionary, I worked with three other college students (2 young women and 1 seminarian), and our job was to evangelize young kids and teens from 1st grade to their senior year in high school by means of teaching small classes, performing short funny skits, and playing games with them. St. Odilo Parish is another mixture of both theologies of the Mass as meal and sacrifice, but it focuses more on the theology of the Mass as a sacrifice. If you look in the appendix under “St. Odilo Parish,” you
will see that there isn't just one altar in the church. Image (A) is an image of the altar dedicated to the souls in purgatory. Also, you can see that there are these cards known as Altar Cards which you can see closely in images (D), (E), and (F). If you can see image (B) and (C) you can see the sanctuary and main altar of the church. Also, there is a rail that divides the sanctuary and the congregation. Your first initial thought can be, “Hmm, this parish is still not accepting the changes of Vatican II.” No, it’s not that at all. Fr. Anthony Brankin, the current pastor, is very traditional indeed, but his intentions are to rightfully teach the people the meaning of the Mass. This is an example on how both theologies can coincide with each other. Once a Sunday and occasionally, Fr. Brankin would celebrate the Latin Mass or the Extraordinary form of the Mass which will be explained alongside the Ordinary form of the mass in the Order of the Mass part of this project.

St. John Cantius Parish, on the other hand, is your typical traditional Roman Catholic, Pre-Vatican II church. As you can see from the images in appendix C under “St. John Cantius Parish,” there is no main altar in the middle of the sanctuary. The altar is actually connected to the tabernacle. In other words, the parish mostly celebrates the traditional Tridentine Mass taken from the 1962 Missale Romanum. The parish, unlike St. Odilo celebrates more Latin Masses during the week and weekend. The altar rail is present, and it completely separates the sanctuary and the congregation in order to prevent “impurity from the outside world in the sanctuary,” as one of my professors had lectured. The church was built in the late 1800s. As a result, the church had to be built according to the norms of the day which were more traditional and in the style of Pre-Vatican II. According to St. John Cantius’ website the cornerstone was laid in 1893 by Archbishop Feehan. The first mass was held in 1893 on Christmas Eve, and by 1918, the parish
had over 22,000 parishioners. The ceiling above the floor is 80’, and the church is 270’ in length and 107’ wide. The church is huge compared to the other three parishes presented in this paper, and it is truly a magnificent piece of work.¹ One can also pick up a brochure that contains the same information if they visit the parish one day.

Now that we have seen four different parishes and examples of architecture, what is the Mass exactly, and how is it celebrated? How was it celebrated before and after Vatican II. We are going to look at two different Missals, the 1962 Missale Romanum and the Roman Missal: Third Edition. These two different books are the most important books in any Catholic liturgy because it contains everything. It is basically like a manual on what to say and what to do during a liturgy.

¹http://www.cantius.org/go/about_us/
The Roman Missal is the book which contains the prayers, formulas, and chants of the Mass. The priest uses it to lead the faithful in prayer during the Liturgy. It was first published in Latin under the title, Missale Romanum, and in 2002, St. John Paul II introduced the Missale Romanum Editio Typica Tertia or, The Roman Missal: Third Edition. It wasn't until late 2011 when the dioceses of the United States began to use the third edition of the Roman Missal.² The third edition of the Roman Missal can be best explained as this: it is a literal translation from the Latin to English. In other words, the greeting and response in the beginning of Mass in Latin is, P: “Dominus Vobiscum.” R: “Et Cum Spiritu Tuo.”

The greeting was translated into English first as: P: “The Lord be with you.” R: “And also with you.” The translation from Latin to English was a little off because if we translate the Latin literally it would be translated as, “And with your spirit.” Et would be the conjunction, And. Cum would be the preposition, With. Spiritu would be the word, Spirit. Finally, Tuo would be, Your. The third edition was published as a way to put into practice what St. John Paul II introduced in the Roman Missal back in 2002. Although, it took a few months, even years, for the faithful to get used to the new translation.

The third edition also came with changes to the various prayers and formulas that the priest says, and they are also direct translations from the Latin version of the texts. For example, in the Nicene Creed that is said after the Homily during Mass, the old translation would say that Jesus was one in being with the Father. However, the text in Latin states, “genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri. This is translated directly as, “begotten, not made, consubstantial with

²http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/roman-missal/index.cfm
the Father.” This direct translation took the place of the text that said, “one in being with the father.” There are other various parts of the mass that were change because of the new missal, and I highly encourage those who are curious to know what these prayers, formulas, and rites are to pick up a copy of the Daily Roman Missal. It is a shame that the previous version of the missal is no longer sold, but one can find access to the prayers and formulas online.

The mass is divided into four parts, although many liturgists divide the mass in two. Personally, I love to divide the Mass into four parts, and those parts are: The Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites. Each rite has its own step and process. When taking a look at the differences between the Third Edition of the Roman Missal and the 1962 Missale Romanum, the rubrics are what really makes both editions of the Roman Missal unique. For example, in the 1962 Missale Romanum, the Deacon and Sub Deacon play a role in the Mass, incense is used a lot, and a big factor is that the priest faces away from the people. In other words, the priest has his back to the people. Plus, the Mass was said in Latin. The new edition of the Roman Missal, with the resulting from the Second Vatican Council, allowed priests to concelebrate, to celebrate Mass in the vernacular, and to face the people. These two missals express two very different theologies. The 1962 Missale Romanum contains the rites of the Mass that celebrates the Mass as a sacrifice, the one, holy, and perfect sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Roman Missal: Third Edition contains the rites of the Mass that celebrates the Mass as a meal. However, aspects of the sacrificial Lamb are still in the Roman Missal, but compared to the Missale Romanum, the Roman Missal: Third Edition was introduced to aid the Catholic community to participate more in the Mass. In addition, this particular rite is celebrated in various ways depending on the community of the parish where the Mass is celebrated.
The Introductory Rites

The third edition of the *Roman Missal* instructs that the Mass should begin with a chant or hymn. Meanwhile, the priest processes towards the altar to bow and kiss it, then he turns towards the chair and greets the people with the sign of the cross. According to the *Missale Romanum* the Mass begins with a hymn or in silence\(^3\) (depends on the parish). However, the only difference is that after the sign of the cross, the priest ascends towards the altar where he will begin the sacrifice. Next, the priest greets the people by saying “The Lord be With You.” The people respond, “And with your Spirit.” This exchange of words between the people and the priest is like saying hello at a gathering or a party. People greet each other by saying, “Hello, how are you?” Imagine that is what the priest is doing right at this moment. The priest is greeting the people, and he is preparing them to receive the meal that which is about to be prepared during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He also prepares the people to receive the Word of God in the Liturgy of the Word. After the greeting, the priest invites the faithful to reflect on their week and ask for God’s forgiveness. Afterwards, the priest begins the prayer called the *Confiteor*, or the I Confess to Almighty God. Finally, the priest will invite people to say the *Kyrie*, or the Lord have mercy call and response which is the final step before the priest recites the formula of absolution to the people. From the part in which the priest invites the people to reflect on their week to the absolution, that is called the *Actus Paenitentialis*, or the Penitential Act. The Penitential Act is a mini rite that occurs within the Introductory Rites that allows the people to be cleansed of their venial sins in order to receive the Eucharist. Another way to look at the

\(^3\)II. The Procession of the Priest to the Altar
absolution is that it allows a person to wholly open his/her heart to God in order to be ready to receive Jesus in their heart one more time.

Next, the people say the Gloria which is taken from Luke 2: 14 when the angels proclaimed the birth of Christ to the shepherds who were taking care of their sheep by saying, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” The chant/hymn was taken directly from this biblical verse, and therefore it wasn't something that the Church invented while trying to come up with the idea of how to celebrate the mass. To end the Introductory Rites, the priest acclaims, “Let us Pray!” which is a sign that it’s time to enter into a new stage of the mass which is to listen to the Word of God. The Collect is a prayer that is said before the faithful sits down. It varies from the season in which the Church is in right now, or it also varies to the certain occasion that the Church is celebrating, e.g Confirmations, Baptisms, weddings, etc. In the Missale Romanum, all of the above occurs, but the only difference is that the priest says these prayers to himself⁴. The people are excluded from the Mass, but with the results of Vatican II and the new Roman Missal, the people can now actively sing and participate in the Mass. In the Liturgy of the Word, the people will play a huge role after Vatican II in contrast to how the mass was celebrated before Vatican II and the new Roman Missal.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word is a tradition that goes back to ancient Israel and Judaism. The Jews during Jesus’ time would gather in their houses of worship called Synagogues. In these synagogues, the people would gather to listen to the Word of God. There, the people would listen

⁴IV. The Beginning of the Mass & The Introit, the Kyrie, and the Gloria
and receive instruction from the rabbis, teachers or Pharisees. Similar to this method, the mass evolved, took these practices, and incorporated them to the mass.

After the Collect, the congregation sits down, and the reader ascends towards the sanctuary to read the first reading which is taken from the Old Testament. One thing that everyone must understand is that the readings aren’t hand-picked by the priest himself each mass. In other words, the priest doesn’t pick his favorites or readings that he can preach well with. The Church has readings assigned each day of the week and each Sunday that go along in accordance with the Liturgical Seasons of the year. For example, the season of Advent must have readings that pertain to the coming or the prophecy of the messiah, the season of Christmas must have readings that pertain to the birth of Christ, the season of Lent must have readings that pertain to reconciliation, repentance, and preparation for the resurrection, Easter must pertain to the victory of the Messiah which talks about the resurrection and eternal life, and finally Ordinary Time must have readings that pertain to Christ’s everyday ministry.

The old 1962 Missale Romanum didn't have opportunities for the people to reflect on readings from the Old Testament. The Mass would go right into the Gospel of the day and a reading from one of the Letters of St. Paul. Coming back to the Old Testament, the readings here are different every day. The role of the first reading is to allow the people to reflect on the traditions and roots of ancient Israel or in other words, the History of Salvation. In the Easter Vigil, there are seven different readings the come from the Old Testament. These readings help the people to trace the faith in Christ back to the moment of Creation. In other words, the Theology is that Christ was present always even at the moment of Creation. In John 1: 1-4, John

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5 VI. The Epistle, the Gradual, and everything else up to the Offertory
the Evangelist writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race.”

In other words, it was through Jesus that the world came to be. When God spoke, “Let there be light,” or “Let us make man in our own image,” the word that God spoke was actually Jesus, or the Word which in the end became man for the salvation of all. The seven readings at the Easter Vigil symbolize the Theology of how Christ was always present from the moment of Creation, to where Abraham was put to the test to prove his love and faithfulness to God, to the moment the Israelites were freed from slavery, to the struggle of the promise land in the times of the Judges and the Kings, to the Babylonian exile and the return from exile, and finally to the moment when he was born of the Virgin Mary, the new creation. The Old Testament helps us to reflect and remember how God never abandons his people as long as they follow his commandments. It also helps us to reflect on the mistakes of the Israelites in order to bring those lessons into the New Testament in order to better understand Jesus’ message and mission on Earth.

Next, after the First reading, there is a pause in between the Second reading. A psalm is either read or sung. The Psalm comes from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. There are different types of psalms. According to an introduction to the Book of Psalms of the NAB\textsuperscript{6} translation, the majority were composed for liturgical worship, and others were composed as a way to praise God or as a hymn. The Psalms are used to help bring the souls of worshippers to

\textsuperscript{6} NAB - New American Bible.
God as a way of praising and worshipping. In the mass, the Psalms help connect both the First and the Second reading. For example, on Good Friday’s 3 pm service, the First Reading comes from Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12 which talks about the manner in which the Messiah will die. Next, the Psalm comes from Ps 31: 2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, and 25. This Psalm is the direct quote that Jesus uses in Luke’s Gospel. Finally, before the Gospel, the Second reading is read from the New Testament. The Second Reading for Good Friday comes from Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9 which talks about the divinity of Christ and the meaning of his priesthood.

The Second reading bridges the Old Testament and the Psalm to the Gospel. Again, the Second Reading comes from the New Testament particularly from the Letters of St. Paul the Apostle, the Pastoral Letters, and the Book of Revelation. The Second reading gives the congregation one final moment to reflect and to listen about who Jesus is. In other words, in order to understand who Jesus is in the New Testament, one has to understand Jesus in the Old Testament. The purpose of the Second Reading is to give us one final look at Jesus before the reading of the Gospel. Like theology itself, the readings require such a long time to ponder and reflect. There is so much going on in these different parts of the Liturgy of the Word that it becomes difficult to demonstrate who is Jesus Christ. By the time that the Mass passes into the Gospel, the story becomes clear but with a lot of questions. For example, a person can understand what the Gospel message was, but to go back to find connections in the previous readings becomes difficult. The homily, which is the next step into the Liturgy of the Word after the Gospel, helps bring the congregation to an understanding of what the readings were about.

A homily a religious discourse like a sermon that helps edify a person’s spirituality. According to the *Roman Missal: Third Edition*, the homily is supposed to draw the readings
together in order for the priest to help the congregation understand what the readings were about. The homily helps, and it doesn’t help at the same time. The homily works because as it was said, it helps the congregation understand who Jesus is a little better. What priests and deacons do to help accomplish this is that they use various example whether it is through a life experience, a short story, or something powerful that happened to them during the week. What doesn't work and will never work in a homily is that the priest or deacon uses this part of the mass for doctrinal instruction. Doctrinal instruction is suppose to be done in a program, school, or workshop. However, in order to bring the readings to life to a whole new level in which the ordinary person can understand and “be lifted high to God,” the homily must be made as a way to help the congregation understand deeply who Jesus is in their everyday life, in their culture, and in their family.

The next part is the final part in the Liturgy of the Word, and that is the creed and the Intercessions. The creed is the profession of faith that all Catholics make in various times in their lives. For example, it is done at Baptism, it is done in Confirmation, it is done in any moment of the year, and it happens in an extensive way during Good Friday’s 3 pm service. The word Creed comes from the Latin word, “Credo,” which means I Believe. The profession of faith begins with “I believe in God the Father, maker of Heaven and Earth…..” In the 1962 Missale Romanum, the Creed follows after the Gospel. In the new Roman Missal, the Creed follows after the Homily. Beginning to see the differences? In the 1962 Missale Romanum, there is no chance for the people to reflect, think, and to learn about who Jesus is. In the new Roman Missal, the people are given a more important role to reflect, think, and to learn about the identity of Jesus Christ not
only through the Gospel and the rest of the New Testament, but to incorporate the Old Testament as well.

The Creed during a Baptism is one of the most powerful moments in a Christian’s life. At that moment before his/her baptism they proclaim the faith for the first time by means of the profession of faith or baptismal promises. The priest/deacon asks the candidates for Baptism a series of questions such as these, “Do you believe in God the father, maker of heaven and earth?” Then the candidate says, “Yes” or “No.” This exchange occurs during a Confirmation, and during Easter time as a way to renew Baptismal promises. Other times, the people say either the Nicene Creed or the Apostles Creed, depending on the circumstances. During the circumstances when a baby is baptized, the baby’s parents respond for the baby.

Next, the priest leads the congregation into the Universal Prayer or intercessions where the Church prays for itself and for the whole entire world. There are no intercessions in the 1962 Missale Romanum which definitely says that before the Second Vatican Council, the Church seemed to be an institution only for the faithful Catholics and didn't seem to worry about everyone else in the world. It wasn't until Vatican II that the Roman Missal included a part in the Mass that would ask the Church to pray for itself and for the whole world.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

In my opinion, the second part of the Mass is the most beautiful and my favorite. After reflecting, praying, thinking, and getting to understand who Jesus is, it is time to celebrate the mystery of a Catholic’s faith which is to celebrate the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. In the 1962 Missale Romanum, the mass is run similarly to today’s
Roman Missal, but it has its own differences. For example, the priest faces away from the people in the Missale Romanum, and the priest faces the people in the new Roman Missal. The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparation of the altar. In the Missale Romanum, the gifts and the vessels are already at the altar. In the new Roman Missal, the vessels should be brought up to the altar. Plus, in most parishes, the people in the congregation are given the role to bring up the gifts of bread and wine up to the altar. Once everything is up at the altar, the priest prepares the altar for the sacrifice or for the meal. While setting up the altar, the priest says various prayers as a way to be thankful for the gifts of bread and wine. Hence, the liturgy begins with the priest asking the people to pray to God so that the sacrifice that is being offered at the Mass be acceptable to God.

The rest of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is one big prayer. This prayer is divided into the Preface, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Communion Rite. The preface is a short prayer that is said before the congregation kneels for the moment of consecration. The preface can be taken from the Roman Missal and there are various prefaces that goes along well with the liturgical season of the year like Advent, Christmas, Lent, Ordinary time, and Easter. After the preface, the congregation joins together to say or sing the Sanctus. The Sanctus is a hymn that is derived from the book of Revelation (RV 4:8), “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he, who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” As soon as this small short hymn is said or sung, the entire congregation kneels in adoration for the bread and wine will be changed into the body and blood of Jesus.

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7 VIII. The Canon of the Mass up to the Consecration
The next part of this giant prayer is the Eucharistic Prayer. There are four different Eucharistic Prayers which the priest can pick and choose for the consecration. The longest and oldest Eucharistic Prayer is Eucharistic Prayer I or the Roman Canon. The Eucharistic Prayers all have the sequence in which Jesus said at the moment of the Last Supper where he was breaking bread with his disciples, “This is my Body, This is my Blood.” After the sequence, the bread and wine have been consecrated. Next, the Eucharistic Prayer ends with the Doxology. The priest says this, “Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.” This part of the Mass is said as a way of praising God for the miracle that is presented on the altar. Finally, the people respond to the priest by saying, “AMEN!”

The last part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the Communion Rite in which the priest prepares the congregation to receive the Lord’s body and blood. First, the congregation prays the Our Father in unison. Next, the entire congregation shakes each others’ hands in the sign of peace, and finally the priest breaks the Body of Christ at the altar. While this is happening, the hymn, “Lamb of God” is said or sung. Everyone kneels down once more in adoration, and the priest proclaims in a loud voice taken from John 1:29, “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.” Following this, the congregation lines up to receive the Eucharist.

The Missale Romanum only includes one Eucharistic Prayer. In other words, the entire Mass in the Missale Romanum is all in the same, with the exception of a few parts due to the liturgical season of the year, but in a similar manner the seasons of the Liturgical Year are not
entirely the same in the Missale Romanum as those in the Roman Missal. All the prayers in the Missale Romanum are said by the priest with a small amount of exchange of dialogue between the people and the priest, but it seems as though the Mass in this format is being offered by the priest to God instead of by the priest and the people to God. In the Second Vatican Council, the change to have the priest face the people during mass made a huge impact. Now the people can feel included in the Mass, and they participate more in the festivities by responding, singing, and exchanging more dialogue with the priest, or Christ since the priest is in the person of Christ.

Previously, the people were in a position in which they were following the leader, the priest. The priest was like a line leader or captain who was leading his troops towards Heaven. In Churches before Vatican II, there used to be a huge crucifix on top of the altar and tabernacle which a priest faces and lifts up the consecrated gifts. This image can be depicted as a sacrifice while an image of the people participating, singing, and entering into dialogue with one another can be depicted as a meal or party or gathering.

The decorum of the Church can also help to depict what kind of theology the community of the parish has adapted. New post Vatican II churches would have a more communal type of decorum like that depicted near the beginning of this paper. Parishes like Our Lady of Tepeyac in Little Village have their altars in the middle which shows the community embraced the theology of the mass as a meal. Other Parishes like St. John Cantius in Chicago and St. Odilo in Berwyn, have a more traditional decor, and embraced the theology of the Mass as a sacrifice. Other Parishes like St. Agnes of Bohemia embraced both theologies of the Mass as a sacrifice and meal.
After giving out communion, the priest would purify the vessels. Have you ever washed the dishes after dinner? This is what happens last in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The priest takes all the vessels where the Body and Blood of Christ was given out, extra hosts will be reposed into the tabernacle, and the chalices, ciboria, and other vessels will be purified. In other words, the priest washes the dishes after the meal. All the extra liquid (including droplets) and small crumbs of the host (including the smallest particles) will be washed with water, and the priest will drink it all. Catholics believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist even if there are the smallest particles of the host in the ciboria and the smallest droplets of the Blood of Christ in the chalices. After the vessels are purified, the priest goes to his seat, the people pray and meditate a little more, and finally to conclude the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest leads the people in one final prayer from the *Roman Missal* before entering the Concluding Rite.

**The Concluding Rite**

The Concluding Rite is the last and shortest part of the Mass. What happens in these rites is that the mass itself is coming to an end, but not entirely at an end. Each parish has a few announcements to give, so this kicks off the final part of the Mass. Before Vatican II, it is forbidden for any other person to come up to the sanctuary since a human being is sinful. A human would infect or disease the sanctuary and fill it with impurity. Therefore, there wouldn't be anyone reading or giving announcements during Mass. A priest is also human, but since he received Holy Orders, he is considered pure while in the sanctuary as long as he isn't excommunicated from the Church. After Vatican II, the ability for people to get involved during Mass became a possibility. Lay people would now give announcements, and they would have the
ability to read and participate more in Mass. Along these lines, the Concluding Rites begin with any announcements for the parish. The priest may announce them, or a lay person may read the announcements. Finally, after this, the priest says goodbye to the congregation with the dismissal, P: “The Lord Be with You”, R: “And with Your Spirit.” The priest gives a solemn blessing or a simple blessing. Finally the priest says, “Go forth, the mass in ended.”

In the 1962 Missale Romanum, the Mass doesn’t end yet\(^9\). The priest reads the sequence of the first chapter of the Gospel of John which reads:


In Latin, the text reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

\(^9\) XII. The Blessing at the End and the Gospel of St. John
And the Light shined in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the Light, that all men might believe through Him. He was not the Light, but was to give testimony of the Light. That was the true Light, which enlightened every man that came into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The Mass ends with the Gospel of John being read. Perhaps this is to stress the mystery that was celebrated, God becoming man for the salvation of others.

In a way, the mass has ended, but in another way, the mass has just begun. The word, Mass comes from the Latin, “Missa” which means dismissal. Have you ever been to a pep rally before at school or event? At a pep rally, the student body or group prepare themselves for the bigger even that is happening at a later date whether it is Election Day, a big rivalry game, or opening of a movie or some sort. The mass is along the lines of a preparation for the congregation, at least if one is looking at the mass through the lens of the Roman Missal: Third Edition. The New Roman Missal is used as a way to prepare the people for a big event, and that big event is the evangelization of the world.

Before Vatican II, the Catholic Church contained prayers in its rites that condemned other faiths and people who weren't Catholic like Jews and Protestants. After Vatican II, the Church prepares the faithful to play the part of evangelizing the world, and the language in its rites have changed to pray for the reunification of the one Church. The Church refers to the members in
other Christian denominations as “separated brothers and sisters.” The Mass is celebrated to give people the Eucharist so that they can bring the Eucharist to the world. In other words, once a person receives the Eucharist, they carry it in their hearts to and for the whole world. That is a beauty that not all Catholics see today.

Before Vatican II, receiving communion is for only the faithful Catholic. Plus, attending Mass only fulfilled the requirement for attending Mass on Sundays. Once the Mass is done, everyone returns home to resume their day-to-day activities. There is no mission, there is no purpose, there is no way the world can be evangelized by these means. In other words, it seemed as though the people had no motivation to go out and live the Word in their everyday lives. The world was entering an era of war, economic depression, and conflict. The Church needed to motivate and give hope to the faithful in order for the missa (Mass/dismissal) to make sense. Vatican II gave the Mass purpose, it gave it a mission, and it gave it a reason why people should prepare themselves to evangelize the world. The documents that came after Vatican II brought a powerful breeze to the Church by giving its mission life after a global conflict against violence and tyranny. It gave people a reason to attend Mass. The people needed to participate, and they still need to participate, and the Mass is where the people can lay their sufferings, worries, and experiences down at the foot of the altar where it no longer keeps the people away from the sanctuary by means of an altar rail. The language that is used in the *Roman Missal: Third Edition*, creates a vibrant environment in which the community can be pumped for the mission and work that resides outside the parish walls. This was the beginning of a shift towards the theology of the Mass as meal where not only Catholics, but everyone are welcomed to the feast.

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10 Letter from Cardinal Montini (Pope Paul VI) written in 1957
THE MASS AS A MEAL

Both Roman Missals present two different theologies, and they both present very different practices, rites, and rituals each. Other than giving the ability to the priest to face or not face the people, both missals also reflect on the way the Catholic Church looked at its own people. In the 1962 Missale Romanum, the theology of the Mass was that the priest leads the congregation (Catholics only) to holiness/heaven. Heaven is the way that the shepherd should lead his people, and all other people of different faiths would suffer in the fires of Gehenna. After Vatican II and the publication of the new Roman Missal, the theology shifted from excluding other people of different faiths to including all other people of different faiths especially sinners. The theology showed more openness, more love, more mercy, but best of all, it updated the Church.

As previously mentioned, the Church was passing through a difficult time in history. It passed through the Great War, World War II, the rise of Communism, and during Vatican II it was passing through the Cuban Missile Crisis. The world was at a point when it was going to end! However, thanks to the efforts of Vatican II, the wounds that were present within other denominations and the political scheme began to mend. The new Roman Missal presented a beautiful theology. No longer are people viewed as impure, unholy, or “infectious” as one of my professors lectured on Vatican II, but the Church saw the importance of participation done by the faithful. Also, the priest faces the people so that the people can have a dialogue with the priest (Christ) during mass as if they were in a meal.

Picture some kids spending some time in their room, and their parents call them to come down for dinner. This is an example of the symbolism behind the church bells. The bells call us
to gather for Mass just as if parents would call us down for dinner. The Last Supper was a
gathering of all of Jesus’ disciples and together they sang, broke bread, and instituted the
Eucharist. Everyone was gathered together on the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion, and it is a moment
that Christ feeds his disciples with the spiritual food. This image of Christ feeding his people can
be last seen during the journey to the promised land when God fed the Israelites with the manna
that fell from the sky. Here, at the Last Supper, God feeds his people once more, and this time,
God will continuously feed his people with the food that is consecrated on the altar, the Body
and Blood of Christ.

The theology of the mass being that of a meal really became adapted among the Latino
community. When the Spaniards came to the New World and initiated La Conquista, the natives
in Mexico and all of South America lost their land, their culture, their kingdom, and their way of
life. In Mexico’s history, missions from the Catholic Church arrived in the New World in order to
force the doctrine on Mexico’s people and indigenous cultures. The discovery of the New World
gave the Church the opportunity to baptize people into Catholicism. The natives had no choice
but to either resist and die or live and surrender to the faith.

In 1531, along came an indigenous man named Juan Diego who was walking through a
place called Tepeyac Hill, and he saw Our Lady of Guadalupe for the first time. According to the
apparition story, Juan Diego identified Our Lady as Tonantzin, the Aztec mother goddess. It was
through Our Lady of Guadalupe that a new creation was born for the Mexican people. According
to the story, Our Lady was pregnant. This symbolizes that a new baby was about to be born, and
that infant is the revival of a people who lost their land, their culture, their kingdom, and their
way of life. Other theologians would argue that the baby that Our Lady was carrying was Jesus
himself. Looking at it from a different way, the baby in which Our Lady was pregnant with was really the spirit of the people who lost everything to the Conquistadors. Through Our Lady, the people and the Church would become one. The mother would protect her children from further oppression from external factors. As the people further began to embrace the new faith, the culture, the language, and the way of life transferred over.\textsuperscript{11}

It was difficult for people to understand still what this faith means and what is this ritual, but to listen to the scriptures, in particular with the story of the Last Supper, the people bang to understand the mass as a meal after Vatican II. Of course, the government also had its conflicts with the Church in Mexico through the Cristiada movement, but today, the Latino community loves to celebrate their lives and faith through a meal at Mass.

\textit{In The Hispanic Culture}

Roberto S. Goizueta writes, “The fiesta, is a principal form of cultural resistance. That is, the understanding of human life underlying and expressed through the fiesta is one in which the attitude of agency (doing, making) is grounded in an attitude of perceptivity in response; more specifically, the former mediates the latter. Viewing himself or herself fundamentally and primarily as one who receives and responds rather than as one who makes or produces, The U.S Hispanic is free to you celebrate life all of life as a gift of absolute value.”\textsuperscript{12}

Remember that I mentioned that the Mass is like a party or gathering? The Hispanic community loves to party. I myself am not a party person, but I know my community loves to

\textsuperscript{11} First Encounter wth the Virgin - Virgil Elizondo’s Translation from the \textit{Nican Mopohua}. http://kaykeys.net/spirit/mary/elizondo.html.

\textsuperscript{12} From the Heart of Our People, pg 90.
throw parties here and there. When there is a party there is food, people, drinks, music, singing, dancing, talking, conversations, and perhaps the people are celebrating something such as a birthday, a wedding, a quinceañera, or someone who received a Sacrament from the Church. In other words, the Hispanic community love to celebrate life. Like Roberto Goizueta stated, the Hispanic community celebrates family, experiences, struggles, and puts it all on the table for a conversation and a meal. In a similar way, the Hispanic community celebrates the same in the mass. All of these qualities that the Hispanic community has is brought over to the celebration of the mass with up beat music using instruments from their home, lyrics/words that talk about life, thanksgiving, fellowship, and praising God, and these are methods that contrast the traditional theology of the Church such as Gregorian Chant, formal dress, a structured liturgy, and importance of the rubrics in the Roman Missal (NOTE: This is not always the case in every parish as it was explained earlier.)

Examples of hymns that the Hispanic community love to sing and use during mass are: “Alabare,” “Pescador de Hombres,” “Hoy Señor the Damos Gracias,” “Una Espiga Dorada,” “Cien Obejas,” “Caminare,” “No Hay Dios Tan Grande Como Tu,” and “Que Alegria Cuando Me Dijieron.” Take note of this sample of the song, “Pescador de Hombres.”

This song talks about an image of Jesus who isn’t a powerful king, who isn't a wealthy man, who didn’t came to earth to fill the rich with righteousness but the poor, a man who has looked upon each individual with love and called them each by name, and he has recognized the labor and work that each person does. This image gives me an image of the Hispanic community who are suffering, working, and who are thanking and asking God for the help they need to live a new day. This hymn, at my parish, plays during communion time, when the congregation lines
up to receive the Eucharist, because upon receiving the Eucharist, the people are asking for help to see God in their everyday lives whether at work, at home with their children, when going to a doctor’s appointment when they don’t understand how to communicate, and when they share meals with their family. This hymn sometimes brings me a lot of sadness.
When people emigrate from their home countries, they for sure feel out of place, lonely, and even homesick. Another reason why people in the Hispanic community attends Church is to pray for their families back home. Jeanette Rodriguez-Holguín writes, “All of us are profoundly affected, sometimes without even being aware of it, by the many places in which we have spent our lives. Often this relationship with the land bursts forth in special places: the desert, the ocean, a mountain, a field. This focus on relationship is key to any spirituality. Latino@ spirituality is an example of a spirituality especially conscious relationship with the land.” All of us, including Americans have a relationship with the land whether it is a place where we went for vacation with a loved one(s), where we went to school as a little kid, where we met our significant other, or where we spent most of our lives growing up or spending time with family. All of us have that special relationship with the land, but the Hispanic community has a much deeper sense because of the distance they are at with the land they surely miss. People who lived on a farm might miss their animals and the freedom they felt coming out of their houses to tend the fields. People who live in the city might miss the places they grew up and the family they left behind. Every person has a significant story, but how this relates to the Mass is what happens during the homily.

We already know that the homily is supposed to help the people connect the readings with the Gospel of the day, but as we also know, many people aren't at church to listen to the priest show off his knowledge of the bible. They are there to feel some sort of comfort or feel comfortable in a new community. How they feel this is by having their priest tell stories of back home. In other words, many parishes have priests who tell their own personal stories of living in El Rancho, or the times their moms spanked them for not obeying them. These stories are what

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13 From the Heart of Our People, pg 192.
really matter to the people who feel lonely. They want to laugh and feel like they can bring something to the table they are eating at Mass.

In other means, these people may have forgotten their identity. Like the indigenous who lost their land, their culture, their kingdom, and way of life to the Spaniards when they were conquered in the New World. The people who emigrate to places like the United States have also lost access to their land, their culture, and their way of life, and they need that support to remind them of who they are. They come to mass not to fulfill the requirement of Sunday Mass, but to regain the ability to embrace their identity of who they are. When it comes to the situation when parishioners nor priests don’t have the ability to bring these other people to the flock to make them feel welcomed, the people will rapidly leave, and perhaps even forget about their faith or move on to a different denomination. When a family member or a new member of the family is failed to be received openly with open loving arms, there is a high chance that the family member or new family member will not be open to trust the family. There wouldn't be that trust to share a meal together. It is the same thing at Mass. When people gather to share the spiritual meal at Mass, and parishioners don’t make new members feel welcomed, of course they are going to move to different places until they feel welcomed.

The theology of the Mass as a meal is a more community-based theology where there is a unity between God and his people. For the Hispanic community, it is not only where they gather to share a meal, but it is also where each individual brings with them their personal struggle and story. That struggle and story is placed beneath the altar and pray that everything is well. On top of that, the people make new relationships with one another which creates a bigger family that the people can rely on while they are separated from their own family by thousands of miles. For
teenagers, this idea of a new family is a big issue for them. While some members of the Hispanic community feel happy, safe, and blessed, other members behave so badly with their kids and other family members.

This behavior causes kids/teens to find other means to receive love from external sources other than their family. Sadly, some find that love in gangs. Others find that love in various communities in the Church. In other words, various parishes have youth groups or programs for this manner. At these groups and communities, teens and young adults who are struggling or searching for a fraternal love gather to lay their struggles down on the table and create relationships that will help them get through to the next day. Being a peer minister at my parish really helped me understand the value that each teenager had to the youth group at my parish, and that is why it became really hard for me to leave my youth group when I began my freshman year in college. It was hard for me to leave a community that has learned, struggled, and lived together. In a similar way, this is probably how many communities feel when a parish would close. When the family is broken this way all the memories they made together at Mass, at events, or meetings would fade into memory.

The theology of the Mass as a meal is very powerful, and it is one that is very personal. A very strong family bond is where individuals in these communities find God. When they attend mass together, they are really celebrating each other, and they are asking God for strength to live through to the next day and to keep the community together. Today, people seem to be returning to mass for reasons such as their own families becoming in danger of being separated by the government. It is through the food that they receive and experience they live through in these
communities that give them the strength to continue seeking God in their lives and to never give in to the temptation of giving in to their personal struggles.

Dietrich-Alex Koch is a Theologian who explored this question of the Eucharistic celebration as meal. He brings up the Didache\textsuperscript{14} which is the teaching of the twelve apostles. Specifically he brings his own input on the Eucharistic celebration by taking elements from Didache 9 and 10. Didache 9, to paraphrase, has prayers in it that gives thanks to God for both the cup and bread that is received. Today, these words are included in the Roman Missal. The original Didache 9 states:

1. And concerning the Eucharist, hold Eucharist thus:

2. First concerning the Cup, "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which, thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child; to thee be glory for ever."\textsuperscript{15}

3. And concerning the broken Bread: "We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever."\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \url{http://www.thedidache.com}
\item "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink." - Roman Missal: Third Edition, The Liturgy of the Eucharist
\item "Blessed are you, Lord God of all 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." - Roman Missal: Third Edition, The Liturgy of the Eucharist
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
4. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever."

5. But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

Note numbers 2 and 3. These two are concerned with giving thanks to God for the fruit of the vine and the bread of life. In the Roman Missal: Third Edition, there is a prayer that the priest says when he offers both the bread and wine to God and gives thanks to him.

Based on what the Didache presents, the Church doesn’t make up words that sound beautiful for its liturgical celebrations. The Church takes the teachings of the Apostles (The Didache) and implements them in its liturgies. In a final way, what Professor Dietrich is trying to argue is that ever since the beginning of Christianity, liturgical celebrations have been celebrated as meals, a gathering of people ready to take part in this mystery of receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Robert Barron on the Eucharist as Meal - Word on Fire

Bishop Robert Barron is an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and he is the founder of Word on Fire ministries.17 What this ministry tends to do is to incorporate the Church teachings with the modern culture of today, hence the name “The New Evangelization.” A blog post that he created before he became Bishop caused me to become a little more

17https://www.wordonfire.org
interested. He spent about 10 minutes in a series of videos explaining what the mass is. He critically explained why the mass is a meal and why the mass is a sacrifice. The first video is on the Mass as a meal.\textsuperscript{18}

He took the story of creation and explained that everything created by God is good. In other words, the Earth is good, the plants are good, the animals are good, and human beings are good. In accordance to the second story of creation, God grants Adam and Eve to eat from anywhere in the Garden of Eden, but one tree, they must not eat from. This granting, Bishop Barron explains, is a symbol or the reality of God feeding his people. There is this notion of community through the feeding of the community, “through this shared meal.” This action of feeding by God is an example of a good meal. However, before Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, Adam and Eve took part in this “Bad Meal.” This meal is where both Adam and Eve “grasped for themselves the prerogative of divinity.” In other words, Adam and Eve grasped for this power and likeness to be like God which not only causes them to be expelled from the garden, but the relationship between God and his people is broken. In addition, sin enters the world.

Bishop Barron continues by stating that God forms the people of Israel to combat sin. God wants to restore that relationship with humanity that was broken in the garden. Proverbs 9 talks of Wisdom (God) building her house, and in her house she prepares a banquet and invites others to come and share the meal in which she has prepared. That is a sign of God’s desire of having a relationship with us, says Bishop Barron.

\textsuperscript{18}https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/the-eucharist-as-meal-sacrifice-and-real-presence/4714/
When bringing Jesus into the equation, Bishop Barron talks about Jesus as God incarnate, “Yahweh in the flesh.” This is an action of God that he himself became man to feed us not just any meal but his own flesh and blood. At this table, “saints and sinners is invited because it is an open table fellowship.” There is no better place to bring everyone together than in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is also known as Zion, Isaiah’s holy mountain, and there, Jesus sits with his twelve disciples (symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel), and feeds his apostles with his own flesh and blood. Bishop Barron calls this moment “the recovery of the Garden of Eden.” No longer are man and woman separated from God, but now they are reunited, and the relationship between God and humanity is restored with the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

That is what the Mass is as meal. Jesus is the host of the Mass, not the parish priest. Again, the priest is in persona Christi, which literally means that the priest acts in the person of Christ. Christ gathers everyone together not only to share a meal together, but through this meal be in relationship with others. In the history of salvation, God has fed his people numerous times, and one example is when the Israelites were wandering the desert and woke up to eating manna for breakfast, but God’s ultimate goal was to be reunited with his people which the relationship was destroyed the moment Adam and Eve grasped for sin in the Garden of Eden. The history of salvation would lead to Jesus, God incarnate, feeding his disciples (symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel) with his body and blood reunifying the relationship.
THE MASS AS A SACRIFICE

What is the Mass? Is it a meal or a sacrifice? Many will automatically say that the Mass is a meal, and it should be a community-based celebration rather than bringing norms and rules to the table. They don't fit in with the experience or the lives the different people who attend Mass. The other side of the argument would say that the Mass is the most beautiful ritual that man has ever seen, and it was first celebrated on the Last Supper when Christ instituted the Eucharist to his disciples by saying, “Do this in memory of me.” The Mass is something to be respected, and therefore anything that is out of the ordinary such as music not being Gregorian chant, hymns that don’t fit in with the liturgy, instruments that cause a lot of distraction from what is really happening at the altar, and the liturgy is something that is supposed to elevate the souls of all people up to God. Therefore to reach heaven, one must be dedicated to and follow the norms of the Church.

My exposure to these two theologies began when I entered the seminary, a school where men discern the call to the priesthood. My first few years in the seminary were a struggle for many reasons, but one of the reasons was because of these two different ideals. I come from a parish that follows both theologies of the Mass as a meal and sacrifice, but with a deeper focus on the meal. Yes, there is a possibility that the two theologies can coincide with each other. The problem was that there were groups of people within the community (one who embraced the mass as a meal and one who embraced the Mass as a sacrifice) who refused to see the other and make an effort to understand and learn about the other. Many seminarians cared about the style of cassock I or others would wear, other seminarians cared about the manner I or others rang the bells during the consecration, and other seminarians cared about the manner in which the Mass
would be celebrated. It was a complete struggle, that after leaving the seminary, I became like one of those seminarians that cared about the littlest things in the liturgy. Of course they are right about the manner and the way one wears their cassocks, but one should understand that not everyone had the same experiences others had nor they have resources to get for themselves something “pleasing for the Lord,” as they would say at times. For this reason, I can conclude that the theologies of the Mass as both meal and sacrifice should coincide in order for people from both sides to understand each others’ experiences, way of life, and thinking. The faithful who believe that the Mass should be a sacrifice where they are the only ones who are welcomed and able to participate and receive communion should see that they aren't the only ones who are and must participate in Mass. In other words, they should begin to open themselves up to getting to know their neighbors at Mass and opening up to them in order to make everyone feel welcomed. The faithful who believe that the Mass should be a meal should open up to the possibility of learning what it is they are celebrating. If seeking God in the everyday life is their goal, then why not start at the Mass? The Mass is filled with so much symbolism that it really elevates a person’s soul up to God for the most part. What exactly is the Mass as a sacrifice?

Recall the story of Moses liberating his people from the captivity in Egypt in the book of Exodus. God sent 10 different plagues to Egypt in order for Moses to convince the Pharaoh to “let his people go.” One of the plagues require the Israelites to make a sacrifice. They were required to sacrifice a lamb and use the blood to sprinkle it with a hyssop on the front door of each Israelite house. The houses in which did not have the blood of the lamb on, the angel of death will pass to take the life of each firstborn in the family. In order for these young ones to be saved, a lamb must be sacrificed in its stead. Plus, no bones should be broken and everything
should be eaten up. If there are leftovers, it should be burned (EX 11, 12: 1-28). Sound familiar?

In the Gospel of John, there is no Last Supper. Instead, Jesus was killed and nailed to the cross on a Thursday (Passover.) In John, Jesus is the sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. That is why during the Mass, the priest lifts up the broken host and the chalice and says, “Behold the Lamb of God, Behold him who takes away the sins of the world…” Jesus in the gospel was in complete control of the situation, and he was carrying his cross silently as a lamb would be carried to its place of slaughter. Sacrifices, according to Dr. Scott Hahn in his book, The Lamb’s Supper, in ancient times would be performed as a way of giving back to God what is his as it is said in Psalm 24:1, “The Earth is the Lord’s.” “A sacrifice was a recognition of God’s sovereignty over creation. A sacrifice could be an act of thanks. Creation is given to men as a gift, but what return can man make to God (Ps 116:12)? We can only give back what we received. Sacrifice is also a way that we can seal an agreement or oath, a covenant before God (GN 21: 22-32). Finally, a sacrifice is an act of renunciation or sorrow for sins. The animal is sacrificed in the place of the man’s sins.”

In other words, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. There is no need of further sacrifices for people to make for the salvation of all because Jesus was sacrificed in the place of everyone’s sins. That is why many Christians would say that Jesus died for them. In the past, the Israelites would have to constantly make sacrifices in order to be reconciled with God, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, God made it possible for people to enter heaven, a transcendental state of perfection, without the need of sacrificing more animals. Jesus was the last sacrifice to be made for the salvation of all. That is why at Mass, the ritual and celebration should be respectful and honored because of this symbolism and meaning.
Going back to the idea that the Eucharist fully expresses the presence of Christ, reformers of the Protestant Reformation argued that the Mass is just a symbolic gesture or act of what happened at the Last Supper. David N. Power, in his book, *The Sacrifice We Offer*, talks about the Council of Trent and its response to the arguments against the Eucharist. For 18 years, the council and the Church have been debating and reflecting on the Eucharist, whether it is just symbol or in reality is the Body and Blood of Christ. Another, is that the Eucharist is not for forgiveness of sins. In the Lutheran tradition, it is believed that the Eucharist is con-substantiated. Which means that the substance of bread and wine co-exist with the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus. In the end, the Council of Trent concluded that these two different substances of bread and wine and Body and Blood of Christ did not coexist, but the substance of bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. In other words, the appearance of the Eucharist is bread and wine, but the substance no longer is bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore Christ is fully present in the Eucharist rather than it be a symbol.

Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of all, the continuous sacrifice of the lamb in the appearance of bread and wine means that once one “eats his flesh and drinks his Blood will inherit eternal life (JN 6: 54).” In a letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, St. Pope John Paul II writes on the very first line, “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church,” he continues by quoting Pope Paul VI in *Lumen Gentium* by saying, “The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the source and summit of the Christian Life.” There is no other strength or life that the Church receives than that of the Eucharist. It is the source of strength and life that God gives his people at Mass. That is why parishes hold times in which people can come to spend an hour
in front of the monstrance adoring Jesus in the Eucharist because the Eucharist is a sacrifice that
gives life and strength to all who receive it and adore it. In other words, Heaven becomes a
reality on Earth. The most beautiful thing to imagine is that every time a Mass is celebrated,
Mass is being celebrated in Heaven. When the priest invokes all the angels to come down to sing
“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts” Heaven becomes a reality on Earth and therefore it is
Heaven that gives strength and life to the people.

**Bishop Robert Barron on the Eucharist as Sacrifice - Word on Fire**

When talking about the Mass as sacrifice, Bishop Barron tells his story about when he
was coming age (post Vatican II), people in his parish and other communities would
continuously talk about the Mass as a meal/gathering more than it being a sacrifice. In his
argument, this became a problem because the mass is a sacrifice too. According to Bishop
Barron, ancient religions used to perform various sacrifices, and these sacrifices would involve
the killing of animals. Here is where Bishop Barron and Scott Hahn would agree, a sacrifice
would be “taking part of God’s creation to offer it back to God as a sign of communion or
thanksgiving.”

Bishop Barron continues by stating that in a perfect world (a world without sin),
sacrifices would be easy. In other words, these sacrifices would be done joyfully and with
gratitude, but unfortunately the world is “marked by sin.” We’ve turned away from God, and we
are alienated from God. Turning back to God becomes hard and difficult, and in a way it does
become painful, Bishop Barron says. “Here is where animal sacrifices become very powerful
symbolically. The pain the animal is going through, even pain until death is an example of the
pain I am going through as I’m trying to realign myself to God by performing a sacrifice—a painful sacrifice.” In other words, what Bishop Barron is saying is that turning back to God is a painful process. It is exactly the same in which a person tries to reconcile his/herself with someone he/she hurt. That process of realigning themselves with that person is very difficult because it requires one to humble oneself and accept their mistakes. When one is trying to reconcile themselves to God (in this case Reconciliation) the process becomes difficult, but instead of performing animal sacrifices, Catholics would enter the confessional to confess. In ancient Judaism, when the Temple was still intact, Jews would travel to Jerusalem to perform these animal sacrifices to repent of their sins. “In a world gone wrong [by sin], there is no communion without sacrifice,” says Bishop Barron.

Speaking of the Temple, this place was the most important and central part of life for God’s people. The way sacrifices were done in the Temple is crucial to understanding the Ultimate Sacrifice in the New Testament. In the Temple, a sacrifice is done by cutting the throat of the animal. As the blood of the animal flows down, the person who offered the sacrifice catches the blood in a cup. Afterwards, he gives the cup filled with blood to the priest where the priest would pour it out, and the dead animal would then be burned to be eaten.

During Yom Kippur, the priest would enter the Holy of Holies to perform the sacrifice. He would perform it as usual (slitting the throat of the animal and catching it in a cup), next he would pour out the blood around the Holy of Holies, and finally he takes the rest of the blood and sprinkles it on the people. This is a symbol, says Bishop Barron, of God being bonded with his people.

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19http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm
Now, when putting this idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament alongside the New Testament the theology of Jesus being the Lamb of God, the Ultimate Sacrifice for the salvation of God’s people becomes more clear. At first, the early Christians never reflected and thought about Jesus as the Lamb, but as time passed, Christians began to analyze this theology to better understand who this Jesus of Nazareth is. What better place to analyze this than in the four Gospels themselves. Bishop Barron states that “all four Gospels see Jesus through the lens of John the Baptist.” Now, here he asks us to keep in mind that John the Baptist was the son of a temple priest (Zechariah) who would enter the temple to perform sacrifices. St. John the Baptist comes from a priestly family, and as soon as he sees Jesus coming towards him, he says out loud, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

If I were to do a survey, which Bishop Barron did, and were to ask what did John the Baptist mean when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God?” I would probably receive the same results that he did which is, that “Jesus is humble, meek, and gentle like a lamb.” Bishop Barron said, that this kind of language wouldn’t be the language that would be used by 1st century Jews. When John proclaimed Jesus as “The Lamb of God,” it is the same as saying, “Behold, he is the one who’s come to be sacrificed.”

Taking the ideas of the Temple in the Old Testament, and the theology of John the Baptist, let’s head over to the Last Supper where everything there will begin to make sense along with the theology of the cross. Keep in mind that at this Last Supper, this is where God feeds his people his own Body and Blood, but it is much more powerful than just feeding. Jesus himself takes bread, gives thanks (Didache 9), and says, “take this all of you and eat from it for this is my body which will be given up for you.” Then he takes the chalice, gives thanks (Didache 9) and
says, “take this all of you and drink from it for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.” As one of my theology professors would probably ask and say at this moment, “are there any heads turning already? You probably will not be able to go to sleep tonight!”

In the Temple, the animal would be sacrificed, and the blood of the animal would be caught in a cup and be poured out. John the Baptist, in the Gospels, proclaims Jesus as the “Lamb of God,” he who’s come to be sacrificed. At the Last Supper he offers bread and wine and institutes the Eucharist by saying this is my body, this is my blood. The language that Jesus uses is a sacrificial language, says Bishop Barron. Jesus is offering his body and blood so that all of humanity can not only be one with God again, but so that the painful process of reconciliation by means of animal sacrifice would no longer be necessary. This imagery happens at the cross where Jesus is killed, his body offered up at the cross, and his blood being poured out. This is the Ultimate Sacrifice. Bishop Barron says, “Jesus taken upon himself the sin of the world, becomes the sacrifice in which divinity and humanity are reconciled.” This is why the curtain in the temple is torn in two. No longer is God and the people separated only for the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies once a year. God and the people are one. God is among us through Jesus, and Jesus is the new Temple where the Ultimate Sacrifice was performed. One of the most beautiful imagery that Bishop Barron points out is that Jesus’ side was pierced by a lance which opens up access to the true Holy of Holies which is Jesus’ own wonderful heart.

“We won’t understand the Mass until we understand this business,” says Bishop Barron. The Mass can be understood as a meal, but if I understood Bishop Barron, the idea of the Mass
being a sacrifice shows off its true identity which shows how close and unified to God we, the faithful, should be. “The Mass is the representation of the Last Supper and the cross.” Notice how Bishop Barron said that the mass is the representation, not a representation as Luther and other reformers had once said. During mass, most specifically during communion, when a person goes up to receive the Eucharist, the priest doesn’t sprinkle the people with the Blood of Christ, but the people actually receive the Body and Blood of Jesus as a symbol of the unity between God and his people.

One final note that Bishop Barron explains on this matter is the role of the priest. In other words, “Why is it so important that the mass should be led by a priest? Why is a priest necessary? Is he more important than a minister perhaps?” Bishop Barron states, “It is very important that the minister who appears for Mass is not wearing doctoral robes like a protestant preacher would sometimes. A minister who wears doctoral robes goes to teach. A priest teaches too, but Luther and the other reformers denied the sacrifice hence the presider became a minister not a priest. In the Catholic mass, the priest doesn’t come out in doctoral robes, but in the robes of a temple priest (chasuble, stole, alb, cincture, etc) because he will be performing a sacrifice. He is a priest, not just a preacher, and a sacrifice is performed by which the world is continually being reconciled by God.”

Isn’t that beautiful? In the Catholic tradition (also in Eastern Christianity) the sacrifice is what bonds us together with God. The meal also does that, but the meal wouldn't be possible if it weren’t for the sacrifice. I believe that maybe perhaps this idea of the Mass being a sacrifice is the ultimate goal for Catholics to reach if they were to wish to understand the Mass a little more. That is why blending theologies of meal and sacrifice together would help achieve this
understanding. There are people and communities that directly understand the Mass as a
sacrifice, but there are people and communities who understand it differently according to their
culture, customs, and way of life. The conflict becomes when these two theologies won’t open
up to each other to see the reality of the opposing theology. The solution to this conflict is for
both of these theologies to enter into dialogue with one another so that one can truly understand
the other. Perhaps the ultimate goal is to understand the mass as a sacrifice or meal, but it could
also open up the possibility that the Mass is both a sacrifice and meal.

How can the Hispanic culture fit in to the theology of the Mass as sacrifice? I asked my
mom about an experience regarding sacrifice, and my mom told me a story about a man who had
a son who was diagnosed with leukemia. A priest told my mother this story, and now she passes
on this story to me. The story begins with the diagnosis of the man’s son. What the man does
next, I myself wouldn't dare try to perform it. The man decided to offer his knees to Our Lady of
Guadalupe by traveling to a local church using only his knees. His journey began somewhere far
away, it isn’t clear from where the man began. My imagination suggests that he began at his
home. He traveled a long way, and once he reached his destination, his knees were dry, the skin
was torn, and he was bleeding. This man sacrificed his knees, and he offered them up to Our
Lady of Guadalupe for the healing of his boy. I myself would not dare try to perform this rite, but
the Hispanic community loves to also offer up personal stories, struggles, and work as a
sacrifice.

In Bensalem, PA, local immigrants celebrate Good Friday services by performing the
“Via Crucis,” or Way of the Cross20. People from the community offer to play roles of Jesus,

20http://www.philly.com/philly/news/pennsylvania/good-friday-undocumented-immigrants-
bensalem-philadelphia.html
Pontius Pilate, and St. Veronica. The reasons for performing the play, that depends on the individual. Certain people offer up their time to pray the Way of the Cross, or men offer their body, health, and strength to play Jesus in the reenactment.

In this particular situation in Bensalem, immigrants were praying in fear of facing deportation. Perhaps they attend the service as a way to offer themselves up to the sacrificed Lord so that they can be with their families, work to support and maintain their families, and hopefully to send their children to college to receive a better education. Other people would also go as far as to make promises to certain saints or to different images of Our Lady for the healing of a child or for a miracle to happen in their lives regarding financial crisis, family problems, etc. These promises involve dressing up their kids as a saint or Our Lady in return. In a way, this is a sacrifice, returning or offering to God what is God’s, and in return, God chooses to listen to the peoples’ needs or not (however, in many cases miracles do take place). The Hispanic community does not only rely on the theology of the Mass as meal, but the community also takes on the challenge or idea that sacrifice is painful, but in a way it connects them to God at a personal level. Although this may look a devotion, which is exactly that, but it also looks like a sacrifice.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCC # 1325 states, “The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.” This part of the

21http://www.uvm.edu/~dstratto/mexico/guadalupe.html
Catechism of the Catholic Church basically summarizes everything that Bishop Robert Barron talked about in his blog. Of course, the Didache also plays an important role in the Catechism because the Catechism not only includes the teachings of the Church that were implemented over time, but it also was written based on the Didache, the teachings of the Apostles. Without the Didache, there wouldn't be any more teachings introduced in the CCC. That is why to explain the theology of the mass, the Didache is very important. The Eucharist, according to the CCC, is what keeps the people and God united. When Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and when he was crucified at Calvary, the relationship between God and his people became one again. That relationship that once existed in the Garden of Eden has been reestablished at the cross. Today, the Eucharist is who keeps the relationship between God and his people alive. Without the Eucharist, that relationship would not survive very long. In other words, without priests there is no Eucharist, and if there is no Eucharist, the relationship between God and his people would be at stake. The Eucharist is what helps us carry Jesus in our hearts in order for him to work through us so that the world may be sanctified. In other words, Christ’s work can be revealed through us because of the Eucharist.

Finally, CCC #’s 1358, 1360, and 1366 respectively state, “We must therefore consider the Eucharist as: thanksgiving and praise to the Father; the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his Body; the presence of Christ by the power of his word and of his Spirit (1358). The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all “thanksgiving” (1360). The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its
memorial and because it applies its fruit: [Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit (1366).”

The CCC definitely recognizes that the Eucharist (the Mass) is the celebration of the sacrifice of Jesus. Here, Dr. Scott Hahn would agree along with Bishop Robert Barron that this act of sacrifice is an act of thanksgiving, but this sacrifice must take us back to the moment Christ was sacrificed on the cross. The only way that the people of God and God could be redeemed and re enter into that relationship with God is by Jesus offering up his body and blood to God on the cross. Now, the CCC also recognizes the mass as a meal. CCC # 1382 and 1383 respectively state, “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us (1382). The altar, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord (1383).
The CCC talks about the Mass as not only being the altar of sacrifice, but it is the sacred banquet of communion. The word communion exists in various words such as community. When people are gathered in communion, they are one people. When we gather for Mass, we are also gathering to receive the sacred food that is being offered on the table which we call (the CCC also calls) the table of the Lord. When we are gathered in communion, we represent the bond between us and God. The relationship between us and God is strong in the Eucharist. We continually are being fed with the Body of Blood of Christ, God continues to feed his people, but it is no longer the food that the Israelites once received while wandering the desert.

In the Lord of the Rings there is a quote that describes the beauty of the Eucharist. The characters known as the Fellowship of the Ring are in this enchanted forest where they are preparing to continue on their quest to the land of Mordor to destroy the Ring of Power. Before leaving for the journey, the elves come to the fellowship and offer them bread called Lembas. This is what they say of Lembas bread, “‘All the same, we bid you spare the food,’ they said. Eat a little at a time, and only at need. For these things are given to serve you when all else fails. The cakes will keep sweet for many many days, if they are unbroken and left in their leaf wrappings, as we have brought them. One will keep a traveller on his feet for a day of long labour, even if it be one of the tall Men of Minas Tirith.’” In other words, the food that we eat in mass is a special food that feeds our soul and spirit that will keep us up for a very long period of time when doing God’s work. “One small bite will fill a man’s stomach,” says one of the characters in the portrayal of the movie, The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. The Eucharist will fill a man’s spirit and soul with just one bite and one sip.
So what is it? Is the mass a meal or a sacrifice? Perhaps this project didn't fully convince one what it really is. The truth is, it isn’t supposed to convince others that the Mass is a meal or a sacrifice. However, what it is trying to convey is that these two theologies should coexist with one another. They should be mixed up so that for those people who are living in the clouds (referring to those who strictly refuse to see the Mass as a meal) can experience what life is like on earth, and so that those who are living on earth (referring to those who strictly refuse to see the Mass as a sacrifice) can experience what heaven is like. If people on earth point to the heavens and say how bad the heavens are without having the opportunity to experience it, they will never know what heaven is like. If people in heaven point downward and boast about the power and place they are at without having to experience other people’s experiences, then there is no way that they will meet God in others. God is both immanent and transcendent. God can be experienced in both heaven and earth, in both meal and sacrifice, in each other and in the Eucharist. What people lay down at the feet of the altar will be used by those who are in heaven in order to bring others to walk with them on their paths of live in order to one day fully experience heaven. This should be the true beauty of the Church, and for there to be schisms within different communities due to different theologies is very childish.

Take a look at these different quotes from the Constitution of Sacred Liturgy:

Sacrosanctum Concilium:
Sacrosanctum Concilium - Chapter 1: II (NO. 14)

“In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.”

Sacrosanctum Concilium - Chapter 1: II (NO. 19)

“With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture. By so doing, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God; and in this matter they must lead their flock not only in word but also by example.”

Sacrosanctum Concilium - Chapter 6 (NO. 116)

“The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action.”
“In certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, there are peoples who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music, and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only in forming their attitude toward religion, but also in adapting worship to their native genius.”

_Sacrosanctum Concilium_ was a result of what occurred at the Second Vatican Council. These various parts of the constitution are my favorites because I can see that the two theologies here are mixed and intertwining with each other. As the Church moves to a more modern world, the Church gathered together to reflect on meeting the needs of the people with the aim of walking with them in their struggle in life in order to reach God in Heaven. This is a scary mission, an arduous mission, but in the end it is very rewarding. This constitution gave way for the people to actively participate in the mass. No more should people stay behind feeling excluded, but the people should feel included instead. Plus, by bringing in different cultures, lifestyles, and music together, the full revelation God can be seen by seeing the people’s expressions of God moving through them in the form of the Holy Spirit. Theology itself is a mystery. Liturgical Theology is also a big mystery. Life experiences of faith really impact one’s view of the mass, but what is important is how we share our experiences of faith with one another. Are we going to welcome the outcast to sit at the table with us, or are we going to reject that person because of who he/she is? Are we going to walk with others or are we going to abandon them and leave fate to deal with them? Are we going to rightfully lead those who are
struggling to God or are we going to judge them? The Mass is both a meal and a sacrifice. The matter is, how are you going to blend the both to make a nice delicious tropical piña colada?

For the youth, the Mass can seem difficult to understand (for some). There are some youth who were raised by parents who are well educated and who have better access to explaining to their children the meaning of the Roman Catholic Mass. Perhaps this is why some seminarians, priests, and others criticize others’ viewing of what the mass is. Their idea and theology is the only theology they have pondered, thought about, and experienced.

There are other youth who were raised by parents who aren’t very well educated, and these youth become lost on their journey of discovering who they are as individuals, Catholics, and believers of Christ. Growing up, they may encounter domestic violence, abuse, or bad experiences in the Church. What these youth need is a community where everyone gathers together to lay don their stories to share and eat a meal together without following these rubrics or rules of the mass.

The youth love to express their talents in music, writing, and even expressing the faith by preaching and living the Gospel in their own particular and creative way. The goal of the youth is to come together to learn about each other, not point the finger. This is where the theology of the Mass as meal and sacrifice come together; where youth who have deep reverence for the Eucharist meet the youth who lay down their struggles at the foot of the altar in their own unique way in a community. It is also where cultures and ways of life and thinking collide, not violently but harmoniously.

This is how the theology of the Mass as meal and sacrifice should be passed down to future Catholics. In order to prevent more separation in the Church, leaders must embrace these
documents and work of the Church through the Second Vatican Council and theologians in order to bring a better understanding as to what is the Church, what is the mass, and to understand that the Mass is both a meal and sacrifice.
APPENDIX A: PARISH IMAGES

Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish

(A) Main Altar and Baptismal Font

(B) Main Altar and Sanctuary
(C) Behind the Main Altar Towards the Congregation

(D) Our Lady of Tepeyac Church
St. Agnes of Bohemia Parish

(A) St. Agnes of Bohemia Church

(B) Sanctuary
(C) Where the Altar Rails Used to Be

(D) Main Altar
St. Odilo Parish

(A) Image of the Holy Souls in Purgatory and Altar

(B) Main Altar
(C) St. Odilo Sanctuary

(D) Altar Card A
(E) Altar Card B

(F) Altar Card C
St. John Cantius Parish

(A) St. John Cantius Church

(B) Ambo
(C) Main Altar

(D) Congregation Seating
(E) Sanctuary
Bibliography


