

Explanation of the Mass

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Mass is the Memorial of the New *Covenant*. In the Old Testament, when God wishes a Covenant, He offers a promise and a condition: "I love you. Love each other". If man says "*Amen*", the treaty is made. Then, a victim is offered to God and eaten later by the people. Besides, a *Memorial* is settled. The "*Rainbow*" was chosen as the Memorial of the Covenant with Noah after the Flood. "*Circumcision*" was the Memorial for the Covenant with Abraham. "*The Rest on the Sabbath*" became the Memorial of the Covenant with Moses. Finally, Jesus Christ, the real Victim, the Lamb of God, made in the Cross the New and Everlasting Covenant. The Memorial of this Covenant is precisely the Mass.

Dinner is the most intimate time in the family. Brothers and sisters enjoy the same food, table and time. They are happily together with their parents. In this family dinner, open to everyone, which we call Mass, we share the same Bread of Life, the same Lamb of God. The first Mass took place during the "farewell party" of Jesus before Gethsemane. The Latin "*Missa*" (Mass), means both "*Mensa*" (table) and "*Mission*". The *Mission* we receive in Mass is to share with our families, friends and fellow workers, what we experienced during Mass. Namely, union with God and harmony among brethren.

I - Introductory rites. *Entrance song.* The harmony of voices deepens the union of hearts. *Penitential rite.* We cleanse our hearts by giving thanks to God and to all beings loving us. Including, of course, your dog, your plants... Then we admit the wrong things we did and the good things we failed to do. We promise not to judge others, not to complain too much and to be grateful for the love we receive. To be loved is never a right,

it is always a present. *Conversion* includes three points. First: to come back to God from whom we have gone astray. To return to yourself, to come back home, to the people who really love you, to the place you belong to. Second: to believe and feel that God forgives you, loves you, embraces you and accepts you as you are, even with the weaknesses you do not seem able to overcome. Third: to fill our just cleansed heart with Christ. This is to commit ourselves to live like Christ and with Christ. Now, asking for this full conversion we say: "Lord, Christ, have mercy". *Gloria*. The glory of God is precisely the peace among men. II- Liturgy of the word. *Homily*. We try to understand with our heart the words Christ told us, by applying them to our concrete situation in life. *Profession of Faith*. We proclaim our Faith and ask to deepen it: "Lord, we believe. Help us to believe". *Prayer of the faithful*. We pray together for the people in need. Each one, in silence, asks for something on his own, with the support of us all. III- Liturgy of the Eucharist. *Eucharist* is the Greek for "Thanksgiving". *Offertory*. In the Primitive Church, the faithful used to bring to the altar bread, vegetables, fruits and other donations of the like. The priest would receive them and offer them to God, asking for His blessing. Then he would place them around the altar to be given later on to the people in need. Nowadays, some representatives of the faithful bring the bread and wine to the altar, while other faithful start the charity collection of money, easier to handle than fruits and vegetables. The food would stain the hands of the priest. That is why he washes them symbolically at this time. The priest pours a few drops of water into the wine. The water represents us. Our value is elevated when mixed with the wine which will become Christ. We offer it to God, together with ourselves, with our fears and hopes. With the *Preface*, *Sanctus* and with the *Hosanna* they sung for Jesus when He entered the Temple, we ask Him to come to our

church, to our society and to our hearts. *Eucharistic Prayer*. The priest, gathering the prayers of the faithful, extends his hands over the bread and wine (*Epiclesis*), asking the Father to send the Spirit over them. Asking God to send the Spirit who gave life to the universal chaos in the beginning. To send the Spirit who gave Jesus human life when He descended over His Mother. To send the Spirit who will consecrate the offerings, making the living Jesus Christ out of them. *Consecration*. The moment the priest repeats the words our Lord said in the Last Supper, the *Transubstantiation* comes true. In other words, the inner substance of bread and wine is invisibly transformed into Christ, without any change in their outer form. *Acclamation*. Since we can not understand this change, we proclaim that this is a mystery of our faith, tightly united with the death and resurrection of Christ. We repeat to Him the last words of the Bible. "Lord Jesus, come". *Intercessions for the dead*. To the loved ones waiting for us in eternity, we give thanks and ask for their guidance. To God, who received them with His eternal embrace, we give thanks for having placed them in our lives. We ask Him to be much kinder to them there, than what we tried to be for them here. *Doxology*. The priest lifts up Jesus in the shape of bread and wine, in an action symbolizing the whole creation, divinized by Christ and returning to the Father.

IV – Communion Rite. We prepare ourselves for Communion with *the Lord's Prayer*, the synthesis of the Bible. Probably the prayer He himself used to whisper in His solitude. *The sign of Peace*. "*Shalom*" in the Bible, means not only the absence of wars and quarrels, but the positive existence of respect, equality, justice and love. *Shalom* is the profound satisfaction we feel when we are faithful to God and honest to our deep heart. *Shalom* includes harmony in ones family, reliable friendship, prosperity and health to enjoy it. It means true happiness in the spiritual and material sense. This *shalom* is what we wish

each other with the sign of peace. This is the peace that we ask from the *Lamb of God*. The Jewish people used to sacrifice lambs in their rites. He Himself would become the Lamb of God, the new and everlasting sacrifice. When God decided to free His people from Egypt, He told the Hebrews to sacrifice one lamb per family, to eat it and to mark the outside of the door with the blood of the lamb. That would be the sign for the angel of extermination, coming into the houses to strike the first-born from Egypt. The angel would pass by and spare the children of that house, saved this way by the blood of the lamb. We are saved by the Blood of Christ, the Lamb God who takes away our sins, elevating us to be embraced by God. (*"Salvation"* is the deep joy we experience in this life, taking it along with us to eternity). *Communion*. Jesus describes "Eternal Life" and "The Kingdom of God", as a banquet, offered and prepared by God and open to everyone, without any discrimination of social status, moral rectitude, color or nationality. All of us enjoy the same food and drink: Jesus Christ. He wanted to stay with us not as a picture or a book or a statue. But just as food which gives us deep down life from the inside. The closer we are to Him, the deeper we love each other. When we receive the Body of Christ, we say *"Amen"*: "Yes, I accept Christ, I love Christ, I want to live like Christ and always together with Christ". V—

Concluding Rite. "Go in the Peace of Christ". Go to communicate with your life, what you have just experienced in this Mass.