

**CATHOLIC PARISH OF HEALESVILLE, INCORPORATING HEALESVILLE (ST BRIGID'S),
YARRA GLEN (ST ALOYSIUS) & MARYSVILLE (OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS)**



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FROM FR FRANCIS DENTON

What is the Mass? (Part 4)

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

If you were asked to explain the essence of what the Mass is in one word what would it be? That's clearly not an easy task, since the Mass is simultaneously many things: adoration, thanksgiving, worship, celebration, communion, and so on. Yet if we could reduce the Mass to its most essential character, we would have to describe the Mass as a *sacrifice*, in fact, *the Sacrifice*. To be more precise, the Mass is the offering of Christ's perfect, *propitiatory* sacrifice offered once and for all to the Father, on the cross. To describe Christ's death as a 'propitiatory' sacrifice means that it is offered in atonement for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price for our redemption by enduring his Passion. St Peter says, "You know that you were ransomed..., not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1Peter 1:18-19). Later St Peter adds: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1Peter 2:24). These words of scripture invite us to reflect, how does Jesus death on a cross two thousand years ago affect me today? How does his sacrifice then, atone for my sins now?

To answer this, we need to take a step back and understand the Biblical meaning of sacrifice. The entire Old Testament is awash with the blood of animals offered in sacrifice, predominantly sheep. Israel began as a small, nomadic shepherd-nation. Livestock was Israel's most precious asset, their whole livelihood. To offer to God the sacrifice of not just any animal, but the very best and healthiest of their stock (Lev 22:21), was an act of faith. By losing a precious animal it was a way of saying to God "I love you so much, I would sooner lose this precious animal than displease you." As strange and barbaric as animal sacrifice seems to us, it was the standard practice of all the major religions of the ancient world. Most of these primitive religions recognised that sin displeases God (or 'the gods'), and sacrifices were a way of atoning for the offence. For thousands of years the blood of animal sacrifice was the common 'currency' of divine appeasement. In reality the blood of animals (or indeed humans) could in no way atone for human sin, but these animal sacrifices were commanded by God in the Old Testament in order to prepare the world for the one, supreme sacrifice that Christ would offer. The reason Christ's Sacrifice does atone for sin, is because it was perfect

love for the sinner that motivated the sacrifice: “Greater love has no man than this: than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

In its own way our culture continues to honour the value and meaning of sacrifice. Our nation’s almost religious observance of ANZAC Day is one example where even a culture as secular as Australia observes a solemn reverence for those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. The spirit of self-sacrifice for those we love is embodied in smaller ways: the sacrifices parents make to provide for their children, the sacrifice of the priest for his flock, the sacrifice of volunteers to help the needy, and so on. In each case the value lies not in how much is given, but in the love that motivates the act of giving. So too for Christ. His sacrifice is supreme and perfect because it was motivated by perfect, Divine Charity *for us*. One drop of Christ’s blood would have been sufficient to atone for our sins, but in choosing to sacrifice everything he had, his very life, he left us an eternal memorial of the boundless measure of Divine Mercy.

Since he was the sinless Son of God, Jesus’ perfect act of obedience to the will of his Father in accepting the cross was the perfect sacrifice which fulfilled all the sacrifices foreshadowed in the Old Covenant. In every Mass we proclaim Christ to be the unblemished, sacrificial ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world’. The infinite merits of Christ’s Passion are therefore sufficient to atone for the sum of every sin ever committed. However, there is a catch: the free, unmerited gift of our redemption must be freely and personally received by us. God never forces his gifts upon us, and that includes salvation. God demands of us that we use our freedom to choose to receive the grace of redemption. Every time we come to the Holy Sacrifice of Mass we participate in and receive the grace of our redemption. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the perennial understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice: “As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on” (Lumen Gentium, n.3).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it thus: “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection” (CCC n.1323). Although Christ’s sacrifice on the cross only happens once, the fruit of redemption is intended for all across the full span of time, geography and culture. The Catechism explains how the Paschal Mystery is ritually re-presented in every Mass: “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” (CCC n.1366).

Quoting the Council of Trent, the Catechism continues: “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.’ [Council

of Trent]” (CCC n.1366-1367).

If we approach the Mass with an awareness of this profound reality, we quickly understand why a spirit of awe-filled reverence and solemnity is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. We also understand why the Mass is perennially relevant. As the 24/7 newsfeed constantly reminds us, we live in a broken world desperately in need of redemption. Jesus Christ is there waiting for us in every Mass ready to offer his own body and blood for us. Let us never despise the greatness of the gift simply because it is offered so freely.

Even though public Masses are currently not permitted I continue to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass privately each day. If you would like Mass offered for a particular intention please don't hesitate to contact the Parish office.



WHAT OUR CARE GROUP IS UP TO!

This week Maree J sent through a snapshot of what the Care Group has been involved in over the past week. Worth sharing! The group's generous volunteers delivered over 100 meals to appreciative friends, along with bread, savoury and sweet treats donated by Wild Grains Bakery. 24 bags of bread and 2 crates of fruit and veggies were distributed, or went to local farmers. A letterbox drop of the parish bulletin and mail outreach to local nursing homes and our more isolated friends is keeping everyone connected as best we can. Hours and hours of careful co-ordination and dedication goes in to keeping the Care Group active and effective in caring for anyone who needs a hand in our area. Thank you to all involved, givers and receivers, may God bless you all abundantly!

SOME THOUGHTS FROM DEBBIE

Until Jesus' birth, God's people could only know of his faithful presence through the things that they could observe about his relationship with them. Much of the Old Testament is, in fact, fairly brutal reading. The people could not see God, they could only come to know him through the things they were able to observe about him, with the prophets helping to interpret along the way. The prophet Elijah was allowed a physical encounter with God, who was not to be found in an earthquake, nor in any other dramatic event, but in a gentle breeze, drawing Elijah into his presence with sensitivity and care. Jesus' birth changed everything. Jesus lived amongst us, fully God and fully human, just as we are, not the God of thunder and war, but God the Son, loving his Father and our Father, and drawing us to come to know God with equal sensitivity and care. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would remain with us when his earthly time came to an end, and that he would continue to draw us into God's loving embrace throughout the time to come. And this is exactly where we are at today. Jesus calls the Father 'Abba', or 'Daddy' and revealed his Father to us through his own sonship. The Jewish Priests and authorities of his time found this to be outrageous and presumptuous, and totally foreign to their own understanding of who God is. The concept of parenthood and the love of parents and children is not only an effective symbol for God, it is reality. Jesus shows us God in a way we can truly and fully comprehend.

I have recently rediscovered the beauty of parenthood through the birth of my new granddaughter. Spending time with my son's family allowed me to re-experience the heights and depths of family life. My 8 year old grandson helped me to chop down a rotting tree. (No chainsaws involved, I am a responsible grandmother!) He had a ball in the sunshine, chopping, mulching, getting dirty, and feeling really proud of his achievements. Loads of fun! And then there is home schooling, loads of hard work! (Believe me, I get it!) My 22 month old granddaughter reminded me about cyclonic

toddlerhood. Inquisitive, messy, into everything, constantly laughing and squealing and never still, she reminded me about being loved as if you are the very centre of the universe. When I left to return home, I was devastated, and so was she. The joy of simple daily activities, such as bath time, favourite books, tickle routines and songs brought back so many memories, and gave me new ones to treasure. So funny! Our newest little one is softness I can't describe, with wrinkles gradually disappearing, little eyes open longer and longer each day, and a sweet little personality developing with each new moment. She is totally and utterly dependant on her mum and dad for absolutely everything. And, lit up with pride and admiration, I see my son, now grown, a responsible husband and dad, with bills to pay, work to do, washing to keep on top of and all of those groceries to buy.

I can see the love of God in action in each of them, and in the way we are together. Unlimited love, dependency, joy, wonder, tantrums, routine, the unexpected, noise, blissful quiet, dirt, mess, the push for independence, and the challenges of letting go, all the facets of the relationship of Father and Son are mirrored in the daily life of families everywhere. It is a parallel to our own relationship with God, which is never still. We are truly his children, with all the ups and downs that brings. Perhaps today is a good day to remember that God reveals himself to us in every moment, the good ones and the not so hot. For that is life, God is our life, that is love, and God is love. Don't forget to notice, and enjoy!!

[GUARDIAN ANGELS OF KENYA](#)

Please remember Fr Jason and his community in your prayers. Covid has hit them hard and daily life continues to bring great pastoral and financial challenges.

[HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!](#)

Congratulations to [Maree Campitelli](#), [Bruce Dowler](#) and [Debbie Edwards](#) who celebrate birthdays this week! An especially big balloon for Bruce who turns 60!



[PLEASE PRAY:](#)

For all of our parishioners, and their families and friends, and for their special intentions, and for all who need our prayers

[FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK](#)

Babies Emmett, Noah Glen Christie, Tedi and Santi; Roman, Blake Smith, Trish Leahy, John Snell, Abby Sharp, Peter Munro, Megan, Bernie Jansen, Andrew Sharp, John, Glenn, Lyn Francis, Dorothy Barber, Maureen Fogarty, Fiona, Annie Preuss, Michelle Ryan, Damian, John, Alison, Heather, Julie Bates, Garry Dettman, Bradley Jordan, Jeanette Henkel, Richard Galbraith, Debbie Huby, Geoff Lucas, Sandra Donkin, Dorothy Fraser, Glen, Fred Bullas, Fred Coullas, , Evie Gleeson, Indy Dawes, Rade Krstic, Megan Williams, Michael Wood, Bill Howie, Jennie, Michael, Margo & Stephen Youngberry, Marie Hammond, John Mulholland, Rhiannon Days, Val Savitt, Ron Garland, Jaz Nueber, James Cooney, Robert, Mary & Gerard Bariola, Tilly Van der Zee, Albert Slawinski, Lydia, Joyce Slattery, Lawrie Field, Annie, Bob Ireland, Val & Michael Christie, Ted & Peter Bowling, Natasha, Mia, James, Richard Adams, Mitchell & Wynn Wilson, Carina Warton.

[FOR THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES ARE IN AUGUST](#)

Ann Maris (03.07.07), Julie Ann Ward (03.07.86), Nick Pitt (John McDonald (03.08.93), Patricia Newell (06.08.07), John Youngberry(07.08.79), Barbara Pollard (11.08.09), Andrew Sotko (14.08.07), Fr Loughnan(15.08.02), Bernadette Hanley (18.08.09), Mary Thomas (19.08.07), Douglas Ireland (21.08.79), Zandor Hunka (22.08.06), Alison Snell (25.08.02) Maria Slawinski (25.08.82), Gerald Slattery, Derek Beeby, Tilly Blackburn, Thea Humphries, Maggie Lloyd-Smith, Margaret Pomeroy (23.08.19), Rosemary Fries (10.08)