

The Mass

Italicized below are the **Authoritative statements of Roman Catholic Teaching** on the Mass

The Council of Trent

Session XXII: On the Sacrifice of the Mass

Canon I: If any one saith, that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God; or, that to be offered is nothing else but that Christ is given us to eat; let him be anathema.

Canon III. If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; or, that it profits him only who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities: let him be anathema.

Note of definition: *anathema*: a-nath-e-ma n

1) a curse from a religious authority that denounces something or excommunicates somebody; 2. any forceful curse or denunciation.

Encarta® World English Dictionary

The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism

1264. *How is the Sacrifice of the Cross continued on earth?*

The Sacrifice of the Cross is continued on earth through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

1265. *What is the Sacrifice of the Mass?*

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the true and properly called Sacrifice of the New Law. It is the Sacrifice in which Christ is offered under the species of bread and wine in an unbloody manner. The Sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice. Christ, the eternal High Priest, in an unbloody way offers himself a most acceptable Victim to the Eternal Father, as he did upon the Cross.

1269. *How does the Mass re-present Calvary?*

The Mass re-presents Calvary by continuing Christ's sacrifice of himself to his heavenly Father. In the Mass, no less than on Calvary, Jesus really offers his life to his heavenly Father. This is possible because in the Mass is the same priest, Jesus Christ, who with his human will (united to the divine) offers himself; and it is the same victim, Jesus Christ, whose human life (united with the divinity) is sacrificed.

1277. *Does the Mass detract from the one, unique Sacrifice of the Cross?*

The Mass in no way detracts from the one, unique Sacrifice of the Cross, because the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the Cross, to continue on earth until the end of time. Christ not only was the priest who offered himself to his heavenly Father. He is now the priest whose intercession for sinful mankind continues, only now he communicates the graces he has won for us by his bloody Passion and Death. The Mass, therefore, no less than the Cross, is expiatory for sins; but now the expiation is experienced by those for whom, on the Cross, the title of God's mercy had been gained.

1279. *How are the merits of Calvary dispensed through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?*

The merits of Calvary are dispensed through the Mass in that the graces Christ gained for us on the Cross are communicated by the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

SUMMARY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE MASS

It is clear from these authoritative sources that in Roman Catholic theology the Mass is far more than a mere memorial. It is a sacrifice. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Mass is a continuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and that it is absolutely necessary for salvation. It teaches that the Mass is the same sacrifice as Calvary except that now it is unbloody, and because it is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, it is expiatory (making amends) for sins. According to the Church it is through the Mass that Christ communicates the graces he has won for men on the cross. It is the sacrament through which all the benefits of Christ's death are channeled to an individual person.

BIBLICAL TEACHING

How does this teaching compare with the Word of God? Is it consistent with what the Bible teaches about the sacrifice of Christ? We find the answer to that question in the Letter to the Hebrews which gives very clear and detailed teaching on the nature of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. (In the following quotations the crucial words have been printed in italics.)

Hebrews 7:27-27: For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Hebrews 9:11-12: But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:24-26, 28: For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself...So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Hebrews 10:10-14, 18: By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified...Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering of sin.

Paul's emphasis in his Letter to the Romans is similar:

Romans 6:9-10: Know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

In these passages the sacrifice of Jesus is contrasted with the old Jewish sacrificial system: 'And every priest stands daily ministering...but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time...' (Heb. 10:11-12).

In that old system the priests had to offer sacrifices continually over and over again because the blood of the bulls and goats could never take away sins but only cover them ('For it is impossible for the blood of the

bulls and goats to take away sins', Heb. 10:4). However, with the coming of Christ and his sacrifice the old, sacrificial system has been completely done away with, because the blood of Jesus Christ takes away sin. Through his blood there is complete forgiveness ('but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself', Heb. 9:26).

The passages quoted teach that the sacrifice of Christ is a once for all sacrifice that is never to be repeated. Seven times in the passages quoted it is emphasized that the sacrifice was once for all. It cannot be repeated, for Jesus can never die again (Rom. 6:9-10). His one sacrifice is complete. No further sacrifice needs to be accomplished: 'Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin' (Heb. 10:18). This means that all sacrifices for sin have come to an end.

There is an obvious contradiction here between the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the teaching of the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ's sacrifice must be repeated again and again: that his one offering is not sufficient to cleanse from all sin but that repeated sacrifices in the Mass are necessary for salvation.

To see clearly the contrast between the Bible and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to the sacrifice of Jesus, note the following chart:

THE BIBLE

- I. One sacrifice for sins for all time: one sacrifice non-repeatable (Heb. 7:24, 9:12, 9:22-29, 10:12, 14)
2. He is never to die again, Having died once (Rom. 6:9-10)
3. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22).
4. Sins are taken away and completely dealt with in the one sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:10, 14, 18; 9:26). one sacrifice of Jesus.
5. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).
6. Since there is forgiveness for these things there is no longer any offering for sins (Heb. 10:18).

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING

- I. Re-sacrifice of Jesus daily/ often repeated.
2. Jesus dies often.
3. Unbloody sacrifice which forgives the guilt of sin.
4. Sins must continually be atoned for in the Mass. Sin has not been put away with the
5. The one sacrifice for sins is not a sufficient payment to God for forgiveness.
6. Many offerings needed. The sacrifices must be continued.

The Lord Jesus Christ could not have instituted the Mass. On the contrary, Scripture tells us that all sacrifices have now ceased with his one perfect and complete sacrifice.

The celebration of the mass is the chief duty of the Roman priesthood. Yet the New Testament gives no instruction as to how to offer mass, and in fact there is not so much as one line on the subject in Scripture. Christ sent the apostles to teach and to baptize, not to say mass...Paul gave many instructions and exhortations concerning the government and duties of the churches, but he says nothing about the sacrifice of the mass...The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has much to say about the endless repetition and futility of the ancient sacrifices. He shows that their only value was to symbolize and point forward to the one true sacrifice that was to be made by Christ...(10:10-14). The New Testament, therefore, announces the termination of all sacrifices, declaring that Christ alone is our true sacrifice, and the He offered Himself 'once for all,' thus forever ending all other sacrifices (Lorraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, 1962, pp. 171-72).

As we have already pointed out, there is a basic principle of biblical interpretation which must be carefully observed. Because the Bible is the Word of God we know that it cannot contradict itself. The Word of God is truth (Jn. 17:17). Therefore, if our interpretation of a particular passage of Scripture causes that passage to contradict the clear teaching of another passage, our interpretation is incorrect.

The Letter to the Hebrews states over and over again that the sacrifice of Jesus was once for all and therefore cannot be repeated. For the Roman Catholic Church to interpret other Scriptures, such as the passages on the Last Supper, to mean that Christ was instituting a sacrament for the continuation of his sacrifice is to cause Scripture to contradict itself.

The Bible stands completely opposed to everything the Roman Catholic Church teaches with regard to the Mass. The contradictions are irreconcilable. The Word of God teaching one thing while the Roman Church teaches another.

Furthermore, we do not need a Mass for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' one sacrifice is complete and sufficient. All who come to him to receive him as Savior by faith, and submit to him as Lord will find complete forgiveness for all sins on the basis of his one all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross. Our faith is to be in a person and his finished work, not in a Church and its sacraments.

This chapter gratefully presented here by Think Inc. with permission from the author and publisher. We highly recommend you obtain a copy of the book in order to grow in your understanding and practice of Biblical Truth.

Webster, William. Salvation, The Bible, And Roman Catholicism, The Banner of Truth Trust: Pennsylvania, 1990.

The author expressed his thanks to the following publishers for permission to quote from their material (the documents below carry the official authorization of the Vatican):

I. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, in Philip Shaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker Book House (1919 ed.).

II. The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbott S.J., General Editor, Association Press, Follett Publishing Company, 1966.

III. The Code of the Canon Law, Prepared by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in Association with The Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Canadian Canon Law Society, William Collins and William B. Eedmans Publishing Company, 1983. John Paul II makes the following comments concerning The Code of The Canon Law: "It is hoped that this English Version of the Code will be a fitting resource for an attentive and fruitful study for the law of the Church..." "We order that henceforth it is to have the force of law for the whole latin Church, and we commit its observance to the care and vigilance of all who are responsible."

IV. The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism, John A. Hardon S.J., Image Books, Doubleday and Company, 1981