

>From Blue Paper Year 6 # 282

"The Catholic Mass"

(Conference given by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in Mariazell, Austria, on September 8, 1975)

Dearly beloved Brethren,

I should first like to thank Dr. Steinhart for organizing his pilgrimage, and I should like to extend my gratitude to the Reverend Fathers for their kind reception. We should have preferred, of course, having celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with you. God, however, has asked this sacrifice of us in order that we may adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament instead. We ask of the Blessed Virgin Mary the grace to adore Him with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength, for there is today no emotion in greater danger of disappearing from the hearts of men than adoration. To adore Our Lord Jesus Christ: that is what we shall do during this hour of prayer, during this hour of adoration. What above all shall we pray for? Here at Mariazell, which you love as you love the very heart of Austria, where only recently was buried the eminent Cardinal Mindzenty, who is for all of us a symbol of the Faith, which is firmly opposed to the enemies of the Church and to all those who would remove from our hearts this Faith; this Faith which is for us the guarantee of the eternal life, and without it Catholics cannot live. We ask the Blessed Virgin, therefore, through the intercession of Cardinal Mindzenty, to grant us today an increase of faith in our hearts and in our souls, and to be truly among those who are firmly attached to the Credo of the Catholic Church and to the Catholic priesthood.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is first and foremost the Mother of the Eternal Priest. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in essence Priest for all eternity, priest according to the order of Melchisedech. Our Lord's entire life, his entire purpose for being was to offer the Sacrifice of the Cross, to offer Himself upon the Cross. That was the object of Our Lord Jesus Christ's life on earth. This life was dominated by the desire to take up His Cross. How many times did Our Lord refer to His Cross: "My hour is not yet come;" "My hour approaches;" "My hour is at hand?" Why? Our Lord's hour was the hour of His Sacrifice. Once nailed to the Cross, and once He had offered His Sacrifice, He Himself declared: "It is finished," "Consumatum est," "I have accomplished My work, I have achieved My end, I have done that for which I was born, to offer My sacrifice to God for the remission of the sins of the world." That is why Our Lord came to us, and that is what the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches us, because Mary is the mirror of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In her heart, no name is inscribed but the name of Jesus, and Jesus crucified, for Mary accompanied Jesus everywhere, even to the Sacrifice of the Cross. She was there present in order to teach us that to accompany her Son to Calvary, to the Sacrifice of the Cross, is what is dearest to her heart.

That is what Our Lady teaches us in a very special way today as always: Love the Sacrifice of the Cross; see in Our Lord Jesus Christ Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. And we also are bound to have this desire to participate in Our Lord's sacrifice, to unite ourselves to the Sacrifice of the Cross in order to be truly Christians offering ourselves with Our Lord, uniting ourselves with Him in His Sacrifices as victims with Him. That is what it's to be Christian; that is what it is to be Catholic.

The Blessed Virgin, who stands near to the Cross - Our Lady of Compassion, Co-redemptrix of all graces - invites every one of us, every human born into this world. In a sense, she takes each one of us by the hand and leads us to Calvary that we may share in the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And how are we to participate in the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ for the redemption of our sins? We participate through our priests. Our Lord has willed that we share in the Sacrifice of the Cross, and in the merits which flow therefrom, that our souls be cleansed of our sins through the continuation of His Sacrifice by His priests. At the Last Supper Our Lord said, "Do this in memory of Me." "Hoc facite in meam commemorationem." He did not say, "Tell this story; remember my sacrifice." He said: "Facite", Do this sacrifice, continue this sacrifice." "Hoc facite in meam commemorationem." And this is the essential difference between Catholic doctrine, which the Church has always taught, and the Protestant doctrine.

Protestants forget or refuse to recognize that Our Lord said: "Hoc Facite," "Do this!" They rather, recall what Christ did at the last Supper: "in meam commemorationem." They do not continue Our Lord Jesus Christ's Sacrifice. The Blessed Virgin Mary teaches us, together with the Apostles and with Our Lord Himself, that we are to go unto the altar with the priest to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and that through the actions and the words of the priest Our Lord truly comes to the altar as the Victim truly present in the Holy Eucharist. He in truth said to the Apostles: "Hoc facite", and we ought therefore to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary for the gift of deep faith in the Holy Sacrifice of the altar'.

The Church cannot dispense with the Sacrifice of the altar. Contemplate the magnificent churches built to accommodate the Sacrifice. This very Church in which we are assembled dates from 9th century! How many generations since the 9th century have come to this church of Mariazell to pray and to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to participate in the sacrifice of the Mass offered by Christ's priests. The altar of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the very life of the Church.

We must therefore nourish a deep faith in the actions performed on the altar through the words of the priest. When the priest pronounces the words of the Consecration, Our Lord - just as upon the Cross in Jerusalem more than nineteen centuries ago - returns to the altar to offer His sacrifice which continues for the remission of sins. That is the heart of the Mass; that is what we are taught by Our Blessed Lady; that is what we were taught by the Apostles.

You will recall from the Catechism that the Sacrifice of the altar is truly a Sacrifice, and that it differs from that of the Cross only insofar as the Sacrifice of the Cross is a bloody Sacrifice, while the Sacrifice of the Altar is an un-bloody one. That is the only difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Altar. And it is for this reason that as Catholics we venerate the Sacrifice of the Altar. It is the essence, the heart of our Faith, because there is a Sacrifice; the presence of a victim is necessary. There is no sacrifice without a victim. Thus Our Lord is present, since He offers Himself as a Sacrifice. To deny this sacrificial presence and to claim the Sacrifice of the Mass is simply a memorial meal, a mere recalling of what Our Lord accomplished at the Last Supper, against all that Our Lord Jesus Christ performed and wished to be continued.

Such erroneous concepts are causing the ruin of the Priesthood. The priest is not only the chairman of a memorial banquet, the presiding officer at table. THE PRIEST OFFERS THE SACRIFICE. It is he who causes the Victim to be present, on the altar. You grasp the greatness of the priest who requires a special character to offer the Sacrifice, who requires to be marked indelibly forever to offer the Sacrifice, who is required to practice the virtue of virginity - celibacy - because the Priesthood is for him an extraordinary gift: to bring God by his words from Heaven to earth, to bring down Our Lord Jesus Christ into the Holy Eucharist. We are thus able to understand; this is why the priest remains celibate, virginal like the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is for this reason that he does not get married, and not because the responsibilities of family life would detract from the duties of his apostolate.

The greatness of the Sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, lies in that it is real Sacrifice, as real as the Sacrifice of Calvary. This is what our ancestors have believed. This is what the Church has always believed. We do not have it in our power to change one iota of this belief. If we do bring about change a formula and say henceforth that we are offering another Eucharist, or having an Eucharistic meal, then we are Protestants. And we are relinquishing at the same time the great Catholic reality which rests on the truth enunciated above: there is no Catholic Church without a priest, specially marked with an indelible character to offer the Holy Sacrifice.

Such is the reason why our beautiful churches were built, and not for an Eucharistic meal. These magnificent basilicas and cathedrals were erected throughout the world by the faithful, in order to provide a worthy setting for the Sacrifice of Our Lord continuing upon our altars, and for the Real Presence of the Divine Victim to whom we are united at Holy Communion and with Whom we offer ourselves. That is the reality of the Mass and the Priesthood.

And it is precisely for this reason that the faithful are to manifest such a deep respect for the altar upon which God's Sacrifice is offered, and for the Holy Eucharist in which are truly and substantially present the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We can never achieve here below a sufficient measure of respect for, or sufficiently adore, the Holy Eucharist.

Accordingly, it has been the custom in the Church for centuries to kneel in order to receive the Holy Communion. It is indeed for us to prostrate before God, and not standing, that we ought to receive the Holy Communion. Have we become the equals of Our Lord Jesus Christ? It is no longer He who one day will come to us in judgment? When He does come will we not be bound to follow the example of the Apostles on Mount Tabor who prostrated themselves out of fear and out of admiration, and in adoration, before the splendor of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it not the shame of our times to think that we no longer bear respect towards Our Lord Jesus Christ? Let us maintain and nourish in our hearts and in our souls this deep respect for our Creator, for our Redeemer, for Him who died on the Cross for our sins.

What do we perceive ten years after the Second Vatican Council? We are obliged to take note. We cannot, we must not close our eyes to the sad realities of our time whereby even priests are losing faith in their priesthood, and in the Sacrifice of the Mass, to the point of abandoning the Priesthood. Why are the seminaries empty? Why are there no new vocations? It is because we have ceased to understand the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass. It follows as a consequence that we cease to understand the role of the Priesthood and of the priest. Conversely, when we continue to understand the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass and its purpose, and we remain faithful to what the Church has always taught with respect to the Mass, vocations are not wanting.

I have living testimony to this effect in my own seminary. At Ecône I do absolutely nothing more than teach the truths, which the Church has always taught, and my seminary is forced to refuse applicants for want of space. These young men are drawn to my seminary because of the Altar and the Sacrifice of the Mass. What an extraordinary grace for a young man to be called to the altar as a minister of Our Lord, to become another Christ to offer the same Sacrifice Christ Himself offered. There is nothing greater, nothing more sublime on earth. It is well worth any sacrifice to come to the altar, to leave one's family, and to abandon the world in order to go unto the altar of God. However, when there is no longer a Sacrifice, there is no longer any reason to aspire to the Priesthood. And that is the reason why the seminaries are empty. Were we to return to the true tenets of the Faith, there would be ample vocations; by continuing to abandon these tenets, in the direction taken by the Church in the past ten years, those seminaries not yet sold will be, and the religious congregations will be annihilated.

What makes the greatness and the beauty of the religious? It is the act of offering themselves as victims on the altar with Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the essence of the religious life. If they are no longer fired up by the ideal that "I offer myself publicly in the Church as a victim with Our Lord, my whole being is offered up with Our Lord", then the religious life no longer has meaning. And that is why there no longer appear to be vocations today. Vocations will flourish innumerable only once a return is made to this concept of the Victim, of the Sacrifice, of the union with Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Altar. There are vocations; young people are eager to commit themselves, and they are as generous today as young people were in the past. But we must offer them realities, truths, as the Church has always done, in order to ensure their flowering.

How I wish you to understand, my dear brethren, just why our seminary at Ecône is full of vocations? Why these young men have chosen to come to our seminary? They come to us for no other reason than to continue the Catholic Church. At Ecône we refuse to become Protestant, modernist, and Progressive insofar as these tendencies are contrary to Catholic truth, and insofar these tendencies have been condemned repeatedly for centuries by successive Popes. We do refuse these tendencies! We do insist on remaining Catholic! We simply ask for Catholic seminaries and Catholic priests. We are being told that we may not train Catholic priest, nor maintain Catholic seminaries. These young men, were I to send them to other seminaries, would be in danger of losing their faith and their morals. Thus, I maintain a deep faith in Divine Providence, strong in my conviction that God cannot abandon His Church.

Our Lord wishes His priests to be as Catholic as those He Himself consecrated. The Pope himself cannot but want priests who are Catholic. That is why I feel that my work remains deeply united to our Holy Father the Pope, and to the Church. The Pope cannot suddenly wish to no longer have what the Church has desired for twenty centuries. That is a contradiction, and it follows that it is totally false to pretend that we are in danger of heresy or schism by pursuing our goals. On the contrary, nobody is more deeply united to our Holy Father the Pope and to the Catholic Church.

We pray, therefore, the most Blessed Virgin Mary to preserve the Catholic priesthood, and to ensure its survival. To this end, let us ask for the grace of numerous vocations and deep attachments to the Catholic Church for young men aspiring to the Priesthood. We shall offer Rosaries for the Church and for the intentions of Our Holy Father the Pope, that our seminaries again may become nurseries for the Priesthood; that the religious may rediscover the way of truth, flourish anew, and return to the Faith and Tradition of the past twenty centuries.

These are the intentions we shall lay before Our Blessed Lady during this Holy Hour, because you need priests, many priests and holy priests. Those, assuredly, are your intentions today also, gathered as we are around Our Lady of Mariazzell, in the name the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
AMEN *Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (September 8th, 1975)*

Let us ask for perseverance not only for understanding and knowledge, but also for fortitude and fear of the Lord, so that in matters of religion we are God centered – the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Psalm CX). Viva Cristo Rey!

Father Zendejas