

# Understanding The Mass

Revised in Accordance with the New Roman Missal

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# INTRODUCTION

Since the second book of the Bible, *Exodus*, is the basis of this booklet, I would like to show its importance for us as Christians. In the words of Peter Ellis, “. . . the basic importance of *Exodus* lies in the fact that it gives us the blueprint of the Kingdom of God, the basic plan upon which the Church instituted by Christ is built. It is important also because of its use in the liturgy: in the Holy Week services, in the prayers at baptism, in the Mass and Office during the paschal season. This use is prompted by the abundance of types found in *Exodus*, outlining in a veiled manner the history of our redemption wrought by Christ.

“The basic parallelism of the types may be summed up as follows: as Moses led the Israelites \* from captivity in Egypt, through the Red Sea to a new life as God’s redeemed, and from the sea to the promised land, directed

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\*Israelites: the Chosen People of God in the Old Testament, also referred to as Israel.

by a pillar of fire, fed by miraculous bread (manna) and miraculous meat (quail) and water from a rock . . . Christ, the new Moses, the paschal lamb, sacrificed on Mt. Calvary, leads his Chosen People through the Red Sea of his redeeming Blood, by baptism, to the new Christian life in which, leading the life of the resurrected Christ, the redeemed follow Christ, the light of the world, through this life as a desert, eating his flesh, drinking his blood, until they ascend with him into the Promised Land, the kingdom of heaven. When engaged in liturgical prayer, the worshiper should go immediately from the types to the anti-types. St. Paul in 1 Cor. 10:1-13 is an excellent guide on how to read *Exodus* and *Numbers*.

“*Finally, Exodus* is most important for an understanding of the rest of the Bible. Future inspired writers, prophets, historians, evangelists, look back upon these events, draw comparisons and make innumerable allusions. No one can read the prophets and the wisdom writers nor even much of the Gospels and St. Paul with real appreciation and understanding unless he has read and digested the great theological impact of the *Exodus* and the Sinai covenant.

“In conclusion, we can say that the theme of *Exodus* is the story of the greatest event in the whole history of the Chosen People: its sublime elevation to the dignity of a theocratic nation, directed, ruled, and protected by the one true God. The book gives the foundation of this kingdom, its laws and regulations, some of its vicissitudes. It ends with the construction and dedication of the Ark and the Tabernacle, in which from this time on, God will

## Chapter Three

# THE MASS

The Mass is a commemoration, renewal and re-presentation of the Last Supper and Calvary. At the Last Supper, Christ expressed his obedience to the Father's will for him—death—by the double consecration of bread and wine, standing for the seeming separation of body and blood. On the following day, he surrendered to the Father's will by dying on the cross. His death is a fact of the past, but his salvific act is eternal, continuing in the Mass. The heart of the Mass is the double consecration, when Jesus renews his offering through the ordained priest by putting himself under the double species, standing for the seeming separation of body and blood.

When we participate in the Mass, we do not simply offer Christ and his redemptive sacrifice to the Father. At the consecration, in union with Christ, we are to offer ourselves and our daily living, patterning ourselves on his obedience and surrender to the Father's will.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Chapter I

1. What is the meaning of paschal mystery? passover? exodus? covenant?
2. What is the story of the Passover-Exodus?
3. What is the deeper meaning of the Passover-Exodus?
4. Why were the people commanded to observe the Feast of the Passover?
5. What was the mission of the Israelites?

### Chapter II

1. How is the Passover fulfilled in the New Covenant?
2. What is meant by “Christ is our Passover”?
3. When did Christ establish the New Covenant?
4. What is meant by the “Christian’s Passover”?
5. What is the mission of the Church?

### Chapter III

1. What is the relationship between Calvary and the Mass?
2. What are the ends of the Mass?
3. How are we to offer ourselves in the Mass?
4. What is the meaning of the consecration?
5. Why should we “go to Mass”?

### Chapter IV

1. How can we make the acknowledgment of our sinfulness at the beginning of the Mass more meaningful?
2. Why do the readings and homily have power to save, heal and wipe away our sins?
3. How can the offering of ourselves in the Mass bring us healing?
4. What happens at the consecration with the offering that we made of ourselves?
5. What attitude must we have to benefit from receiving Holy Communion?