

## **The One Sacrifice of Christ and the Mass (32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

### **Hebrews 9:24-28—Jesus' Sacrifice: Once and For All**

<sup>24</sup> *For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.* <sup>25</sup> *Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own;* <sup>26</sup> *for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* <sup>27</sup> *And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment,* <sup>28</sup> *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* (Hebrews 9:24-28)

1. Ascension: “Christ has entered... into heaven itself” (9:24)
2. Two Temples: early Jewish cosmology (9:24)
  - a. Heavenly Temple = the “true one”
  - b. Earthly Temple = a “copy” or “antitype” (Greek *antitypos*)
3. Pattern of the Earthly Tabernacle:
 

*And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst... And see that you make them after the pattern (Greek *typos*) for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.* (Exod 25:8, 40)
4. Day of Atonement: “high priest enters the Holy Place yearly” (cf. Lev 16:15-17)
5. One Sacrifice: “once for all at the end of the age” (Greek *synteleia tōn aiōnon*) (9:26)
6. Particular Judgment: “men... die once” and then comes “the judgment” (9:27)
7. Second Coming: “Christ... will appear a second (Greek *deuteros*) time” (9:28)

Martin Luther (16<sup>th</sup> Century): The priest offers up once again Jesus Christ, who offered himself only once (Heb 9:25-26), just as he died only once and cannot die again or be offered up again (Rom 6:9-10)... *Yet they [Catholic priests] go ahead and every day offer him up more than a hundred thousand times throughout the world.* They thereby deny, both with their deeds and in their hearts, that Christ has washed sin away and has died and risen again. *This is such an abomination that I don't believe it could be sufficiently punished on earth if it rained pure fire from heaven.* The blasphemy is so great that it must simply wait for eternal hell fire. (Martin Luther, *The Abomination of the Secret Mass*, in Pelikan, *Luther's Works*, vol. 36, p. 320.)

### **The Living Tradition**

Council of Trent (16<sup>th</sup> Century): In the divine sacrifice that is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner [cf. Heb 9:14, 27f.] on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. (Council of Trent, *Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Ch. 2 [1562 A.D.])

Catechism: 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 offered in an unbloody manner ... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.” (CCC 1367, citing the Council of Trent, *Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Ch. 2 [1562 A.D.], and Heb 9:14, 27)

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection (32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

1. Why did Martin Luther think that the concept of the Mass as a sacrifice was “blasphemy”? How did the Council of Trent use the letter to the Hebrews to respond to his objection?

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### **For Further Reading**

1. St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*. Trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P. Lander, Wyo.: Aquinas Institute, 2012.
2. Mary Healy. *Hebrews*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2016.
3. Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey, eds. *Hebrews*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament X. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2005.
4. James T. O’Connor. *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005.