

▼ Introduction

▼ Context

- In the podcast series on the Mass, we are now considering the theology of the Mass.
- Fr MacPherson covered the fundamental nature of the Mass, drawing out truths about it and examining Protestant objections.
- ▼ Today, I would like to go more deeply into the question of the nature of the Mass, and especially its relationship to the Holy Eucharist:
 - We have different terms we use when speaking about the Mass and the Eucharist, and we want to find out how they are related: we call the Mass a sacrifice, of course; we call the Eucharist a “sacrament”; and in recent times, the “meal” aspect of the Mass and the Eucharist has been emphasized.
 - ▼ Archbishop Lefebvre, for his part, noted a tendency in recent times to separate sacrifice and sacrament; and he also spoke of the overemphasis on the Mass as a meal primarily, thereby downplaying the sacrificial nature of the Mass
 - “The New Mass was conceived and produced as a meal, and not as a sacrifice. That is why the altar was changed into a table, and the priest into a president of an assembly... What is happening now was already beginning to happen before the Council, with this tendency to separate the Eucharist as a sacrament from the sacrifice of the Cross.” (Open Letter to Confused Catholics)
 - What does sound theology have to say about these terms and how they are related? That is basically the question we seek to answer in this episode.
 - I would note also that we are definitely going to be “doing theology” in this episode, which means that we will be using our reason to investigate what we already believe by faith.

▼ Order

- ▼ **Part ONE:** In any theological study, we must begin with what has been handed down to us by the Church in her infallible Magisterium. The Council of Trent gives us the most complete expression of what the Mass is and what we must believe about the Mass, so we will begin there.

- Fr MacPherson has already mentioned this, but I will strive to summarize the key points for our own investigation here.
- ▼ **Part TWO:** After seeing what Trent teaches, we will be able to express more clearly the questions we are investigating here.
 - Ultimately, as I mentioned, we are asking about the relationship in the Mass among the terms “sacrament,” “sacrifice,” and “meal.” But once we see what the Church has defined, we can see that the connection among these terms centers around one concept that we will investigate.
- ▼ **Part THREE:** To answer our question, we are going to turn to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the “Common Doctor.” The majority of our work will be here, and that will be divided into the following points:
 - **First**, we will look at how St. Thomas approaches the sacraments in his *Summa Theologiae*.
 - **Second**, we will see how the Eucharist not only “fits” into St. Thomas’ understanding of the sacraments, but is in fact the sacrament “par excellence.”
 - **Third**, we will see how St. Thomas treats of the Mass, as the rite which surrounds and enshrines the Eucharist. It is here that we will be able to answer our initial question about the various “characters” that the Mass has, how they all are intimately connected, and which one predominates.

▼ Part One: Trent on the Mass

- ▼ The Council of Trent wrote on the Mass during the third part of the Council, and specifically in the 22nd Session. The Eucharist had already been considered in the 13th Session.

FYI: The Council was suspended twice so that there were three parts to the Council. The Eucharist was considered during the second part, and specifically in 1551. Session 22, on the Mass, came 11 years later (during the third part of the Council), in 1562.

- We will be looking here only at an excerpt from the 22nd Session, the chapter on the institution of the Mass. This chapter very richly describes how the Council considered the Mass. There are “Canons” (or doctrinal statements) following the chapters that give the actual statements which we must believe to be Catholic.
- I will read (sometimes quoting, sometimes paraphrasing) a part of this first chapter, and then we will summarize the main teachings.

▼ Excerpts from the Chapter on the Institution of the Mass:

- St. Paul tells us that there was an insufficiency in the Levitical priesthood [the priesthood of the Old Covenant], and therefore it was necessary “that another priest arise ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’, our Lord Jesus Christ, who could make perfect all who were to be sanctified and bring them to fulfillment.”
- “[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 for them an everlasting redemption.”
- “But, because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper... in order to leave his beloved Spouse the Church **a visible sacrifice** (as the nature of man demands) – **by which the bloody [sacrifice] that he was once for all to accomplish on the Cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power applied for the forgiveness of the sins that we daily commit** – declaring himself constituted a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, **he offered his body and blood under the species of bread and wine to God the Father**, and, **under the same signs**, gave them to partake of to the disciples (whom he then established as priests of the New Covenant) and ordered them and their successors in the priesthood to

offer, saying, 'Do this in remembrance of me', as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught."

- "For, after he celebrated the **old Pasch**, which the multitude of the children of Israel **immolated in memory** of their exodus from Egypt, **Christ instituted a new Pasch**, namely, himself, to be **immolated** by the Church through her priests **under the visible signs in memory of his passage** from this world to the Father when by the shedding of his blood he redeemed us."

▼ Summary of Teachings:

The main points listed below are drawn from Joseph de Sainte-Marie's "The Holy Eucharist – The World's Salvation," from chapter 9 (page 331 in the English edition).

▼ The Mass is a visible sacrifice

- Canon 1 will say it is a "true and proper sacrifice"
- It is visible because we have the "species of bread and wine," i.e. visible signs, and the words and gestures of Christ.
- Its visibility helps man, who learns about the invisible realities by means of what he can see.

▼ It is the very same sacrifice of Christ, offered and immolated on the Cross.

- Christ on the Cross offered Himself as a true sacrifice to God the Father, and Christ was *immolated* on the Cross, i.e. the victim is in some sense destroyed (like the Old Testament holocaust).
- The Mass is going to be precisely the same sacrifice, and therefore contain the same victim, the same priest, the same oblation, and an immolation.
- The Mass will **re-present** the bloody sacrifice of the Cross.

▼ It is celebrated according to a rite instituted by Christ at the Last Supper.

- The Mass is reproducing the rite which Christ instituted at the Last Supper, and so the Last Supper itself must already be a sacrifice, re-presenting the sacrifice on the Cross.
- Whence, we have a clear sense of the relationship among the Last Supper, the Cross, and the Mass: they are all the same sacrifice. The Last Supper re-presents the sacrifice of the Cross before its accomplishment and is the very institution of the continued re-presentation of the Mass. The Mass re-presents the same sacrifice of the Cross, but after it has been accomplished.

- ▼ **The purpose of the sacrifice of the Mass is the application of the sacrifice of the Cross to the members of the Church.**
 - Why do we need to “repeat” the sacrifice of the Cross? For the sake of the salvation of men – it is the application of the Cross to the members of the Church.
 - This corresponds again both to the nature of man and to the way God makes His covenant with men: we need something visible to lead us to the invisible, and we need some kind of “memorial” by which we profess and realize the agreement with God. The Mass is this memorial, but more than that, it is how we ourselves “touch” the very sacrifice that causes our salvation.

- ▼ **The institution of the priesthood is tied to that of the Mass, and the celebration of the sacrifice by the Church is made exclusively by the priests of the New Testament.**
 - Christ made his disciples priests at the Last Supper, while He was instituting the Mass, and He commanded them (and their successors in the priesthood) to offer that same sacrifice continually.
 - As Trent will mention elsewhere, this fulfills the Old Testament prophecies about a pure sacrifice, a clean oblation, being offered for the rest of time. But this happens only through the New Testament priesthood, which itself fulfills and perfects the Levitical priesthood.

▼ Part Two: The Questions

- ▼ The review of the Council of Trent's teachings puts us in a position to express more clearly what we want to investigate as theologians, i.e. as reasoning about the faith we have received.
 - We can also mention that several of the episodes of the podcast have already, in one way or another, touched on these points, most notably: Fr. Robinson's first episode, and Fr. Reuter's episode connecting the Last Supper with the Old Testament Pasch.
 - I will be repeating some of what was said there, but hopefully this episode adds to it and helps us consider these truths in more detail.
- ▼ Before we express our fundamental questions, let's note a couple of things:
 - First, it is clear that Trent, in talking about the Mass, calls it at least three things: it is a sacrifice; it is a sacrament (i.e. contained under visible signs); it has something to do with a meal, since it is related to the Last Supper (supper = meal).
 - Second, Trent says that the Mass is *primarily* a sacrifice, and that it is so because it re-presents the sacrifice of the Cross.
- From this perspective, we can see that the first question for the theologian is: **how is the Mass first and foremost a *sacrifice*?**
- ▼ That question brings up another: **what does the word "re-present" mean**, since it seems Trent uses it to explain the sacrificial nature of the Mass?
 - St. Augustine says: "[Christ is immolated in Himself only once, and nevertheless, Christ is immolated daily in the sacrament.](#)" We are basically asking, what does the immolation "in the sacrament" mean?

- ▼ Finally, those questions will help us answer our original question: **how should we understand the sacramental and meal aspects of the Mass?**
 - These will become clear once we understand the answer to the previous question. “With the truth, all things harmonize.”

▼ Part Three: The Teaching of St. Thomas

▼ **Section One: The Sacraments in General**

We will go through crucial points that St. Thomas makes regarding the sacraments in general. These will allow us to see how he integrates the Eucharist and the Mass into his understanding of the sacraments. We won't take the time to defend these points, but only to present them.

▼ **FIRST: Sacraments are essentially *signs***

- The starting point for St. Thomas in the *Summa* is this point, that sacraments are signs of sacred things connected with man's sanctification.
- Seeing the sacraments as *signs* will allow St. Thomas to group together both Old Testament sacraments (such as the Paschal sacrifice and Passover) and New Testament sacraments. Both are signs of sacred things that relate to man's sanctification.
- ▼ Further, this makes sense as a starting place, because signs are uniquely adapted to man's nature: since man is body and soul, he learns about spiritual and invisible realities through his senses. And this is precisely the way a sign functions: it itself is able to be sensed, but it leads the mind to something that is not material and sensible, but invisible.
 - For example: the words that I am using right now lead the mind of the hearer to my thought, which he cannot see or hear.
- ▼ St. Thomas will say further that the sacraments are signs of something in the past, something in the present, and something in the future.
 - The easiest way to understand this is to remember the hymn, "O sacrum convivium": "O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur." – "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received: we recall the memory of His Passion, our mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."

▼ **SECOND: New Testament sacraments are also *causes* of what they signify**

- ▼ To distinguish the Old Testament sacraments from the New Testament sacraments, St. Thomas introduces the concept of the causality of the sacraments:

- Whereas the O.T. sacraments were merely figures or signs of what was to come, the N.T. sacraments themselves must be considered *causes* of grace.
 - This is where we get our catechism definition of the sacraments as “signs which effect what they signify.” Not only are they pointing to man’s sanctification, but they are also themselves in some way responsible for it, i.e. they themselves *work* that sanctification.
- ▼ In order to marry these two concepts of “sign” and “cause” in the N.T. sacraments, St. Thomas wants us to see the sacraments as *instruments* that God uses in man’s sanctification. To explain this, we can use an analogy:
- A man can use an instrument in his work, for example: the painter and the paint brush. What is the cause of the painting? We could answer, the painter (Leonardo da Vinci), but we could also say that the paint brush had something to do with it. The paint brush, *by itself*, cannot make the painting. And even though the painter himself could use a different brush, or a different medium altogether, nevertheless, he in fact used *this* brush, and therefore this specific brush is a cause of the painting.
 - We call such a cause the “instrumental cause” as opposed to the “principal cause.”
- ▼ We speak about God as being the principal cause of the sanctification of man, but we can speak about the N.T. sacraments as being the instrumental cause of man’s sanctification.
- When water is poured on the baby’s head and the words are pronounced, it is *that ceremony* that is responsible for the baby’s sanctification.
 - Not the ceremony in separation from God, but God working *through* the water and the words and the minister.
 - In fact, we see precisely this in the life of Christ: on many occasions, He joins gestures or material to His words to perform a miracle, e.g. anointing the eyes of the blind man with mud, or touching the leper to cleanse him.
- ▼ **THIRD: New Testament sacraments must, in some way, *contain* what they signify**
- This is a more complicated idea that St. Thomas goes into a lot of detail about, but we will try to summarize it. In fact, it follows directly from what we just said about the sacraments being causes.

- If a sacrament is going to be some kind of cause of man's sanctification, then they must in some way "have what it takes" to sanctify man.
 - Now, they do not contain what sanctifies man in some permanent fashion, as if water *itself* contained grace. They are not permanent repositories of grace, but channels of grace. That is, grace flows through them, and thus, while they are working, is in some way contained or present within them.
- ▼ Think again about the analogy we made above with an instrument that man uses:
- If a man writes intelligent words with a pen, then in some way, the pen is a cause of those words. Not by itself, but only insofar as it is moved by the man.
 - Yet we can and do say that intelligence flows through the pen. We even describe those who are particularly gifted as having "a swift pen" or "a witty pen."
 - This shows that we consider the pen a real cause of the effect, and thus we understand the intelligent words to be flowing through the pen, even though the pen in and by itself does not have intelligence.
 - Such a reflection is enough to ground St. Thomas' understanding of "containing" here: the sacraments of the N.T. not only signify grace, but they cause it, and as such, they are carriers of that grace.
- ▼ We should mention here one more point of capital importance for St. Thomas: all of the N.T. sacraments derive their ability to be causes from the Passion of Christ.
- This should be obvious because sacraments are channels of grace, and all grace comes from Christ, ultimately from His sacrifice on the Cross, which is the cause of our sanctification.
 - It's a crucial point, because it means that every single sacrament in some way signifies Our Lord's Passion and therefore His sacrifice.
 - Baptism is an easy example here, just to illustrate: as St. Paul explains, when we are baptized, we die and rise again with Christ. Thus, the Passion is "built in" to the signification of Baptism. Such is also true with regard to all of the other sacraments.
- ▼ **FOURTH: Sacraments are not only for healing and sanctifying man, but they are also for the glorification of God, that is, for the worship of God**

- A much more “obvious” idea, and yet it needs to be stated: the sacraments have always been understood as remedies for fallen man, and they are indeed such. Yet, they are also the way that we worship God.
- We can see this very clearly in a sacrament like Baptism, which has been called the “doorway to the sacraments”: Baptism gives man something that enables him to be a true worshipper of God, receiving the divine things that God gives and offering his own prayers to God. A baptized soul can now worship God “in spirit and in truth,” and he does that mainly by participating in the whole sacramental life.
- So sacraments always have this dimension of worshipping God as well as healing and sanctifying man.

▼ **Section Two: The Eucharist is the Sacrament “Par Excellence”**

In St. Thomas’ understanding, the Eucharist and therefore the Mass is not an exception to his view of the sacraments, but actually the sacrament that most perfectly fulfills what a sacrament should be. In fact, we call it “*The Sacrament*” (the Blessed Sacrament), taking the general name for the individual because of its excellence (antonomasia, e.g. “The Bard” for Shakespeare).

- ▼ **Right away, there are a few difficulties with considering the Eucharist as “fitting” within St. Thomas’ conception of a sacrament. These difficulties suggest that the Eucharist should be considered as a different kind of thing than the other sacraments.**

Looking at these will help us understand how St. Thomas’ approach admirably places the Eucharist as the chief among the sacraments.

- **First:** all of the other sacraments work when there is an *application* of the sacrament to a person, e.g. baptism is pouring water over the head of the person; confirmation is applying the oil to the forehead; Holy Orders is the laying on of hands. But the Eucharist seems to come about at the words of consecration, and *not* when communion is given (i.e. not when there is an *application* of the sacrament to a person).
- **Second:** all of the other sacraments seem to have just one “part,” so to speak – the words are spoken with the matter being present or the action being performed. But in the Eucharist, there are *two* consecrations: first of the bread, then of the wine.
- **Third:** the sacraments of the New Testament “effect what they signify,” that is, they point to and bring about grace in the soul of the recipient. But in the Eucharist, the words do not really point to grace, but to Christ Himself. And

Christ already exists, and even already is in the soul of the believer. So what, in fact, does the Eucharist as a sacrament cause?

- ▼ Now we are going to see how St. Thomas integrates the Eucharist into his understanding of the sacraments. We will do this by summarizing the key points from St. Thomas:
 - Insofar as the Eucharist is a sacrament (and therefore a sign), it has a double aspect: the species of bread and the species of wine – the double consecration – do not make for two sacraments and two signs, but only *one sacrament*.
 - ▼ Now what does the double consecration, the presence of Our Lord's Body *and* Blood signify? It can only signify the separation of that body and blood, that is, the immolation of Our Lord.
 - This is indeed how Our Lord instituted and celebrated the sacrament on Holy Thursday: "on the night He was betrayed" / "this the chalice of my blood which is *shed*."
 - ▼ Further, sacraments *effect what they signify*. Therefore, what does the Eucharist in the double consecration actually *effect* or *cause*? It causes the presence of Our Lord, yes, but more specifically, the presence of our immolated Lord, of *Christus passus*: the suffering Christ, the sacrificed Christ.
 - St. Thomas will say: "The Eucharist is the perfect sacrament of the Lord's passion inasmuch as it contains the very Christ Himself who suffered."
 - ▼ Taking yet another step, we said that sacraments must contain what they signify, and that they all derive their power of sanctification from the Passion of Christ. It is obvious from what we just said that the Eucharist contains Christ in the most perfect way possible, and that, as we just quoted from St. Thomas, the connection between the Eucharist and the Cross is as close as can be, for they are the *same sacrifice*.
 - Whereas the other sacraments are sacred because they contain a *power* to sanctify, the Eucharist is sacred because it contains the author of sanctification, and in His very act of saving us, i.e. His sacrifice on the Cross.
 - Again, the Eucharist does not merely signify the Passion as its cause, but in some way is the very same Passion.
 - ▼ Finally, we said that sacraments are not only for the healing of man by grace, but also are acts of worship. But the Eucharist are the most perfect worship of

God possible, for they are the very act by which Christ fulfills all justice and adores God as He must be adored.

- Therefore, here too the sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments, for it is worship in the highest possible sense.

▼ We are now in a position to turn back to the objections and give answers to them. The answers will help us see further how the Eucharist, in the mind of St. Thomas, is the most perfect of all the sacraments, precisely because it fulfills perfectly what a sacrament is.

▼ Reply to the First

- The Eucharist, unlike the other sacraments, is “fully” a sacrament already in the double consecration. The reception of Holy Communion does not “make” the sacrament, but follows only after the sacrament is in some way completed.
- This does not make the Eucharist a different kind of thing, but actually the most perfect of the sacraments.
- For the other sacraments only “work” on account of the power of God which works through them. That power is flowing through them only when they are applied to their subject, e.g. the water being poured on the head of the infant. These sacraments therefore truly contain what is sacred (the power of God), but only in a relative and passing way.
- But the Eucharist contains what is sacred absolutely and in a permanent way: the sacrament contains Christ Himself. Thus, it also sanctifies when applied to a person, i.e. when communion is given, yet not in a passing way, but because Christ, author of sanctity is really there.
- This is why we call also the Eucharist the “sanctissimum” – the most sacred.

▼ Reply to the Second

- The Eucharist has two aspects, namely the species of bread and the species of wine, because that is required for the signification of the *sacrifice* of Christ, i.e. the connection with the Passion.
- The Eucharist is not merely food and drink (though it is that), but food and drink “of the everlasting covenant,” i.e. it is the communion with Christ suffering and sacrificed. (As Fr. Reuter explained in his podcast episode.)
- The double consecration perfects the signification of the sacrament.

▼ Reply to the Third

- The Eucharist does not “cause Christ” of course, but it does cause the immolated Christ to be present, yet in a sacramental way, i.e. under the signs that are the species of bread and wine.
- Christ’s sacramental and real presence in the Eucharist is the sign of something further, namely, the graces of union with the Mystical Body: this is precisely what His sacrifice brought about, “that they all might be one.” That is why we call the reception of the sacrament “communion.” It is meant to make us one with Christ in His ultimate act of worship of God, and therefore also united to God the Father as He Himself is united to His Father.
- Therefore again, we see the excellence of the Eucharist as a sacrament because it realizes already on earth the kind of unity we will have in heaven with God. In so doing, it gives us a “pledge of future glory,” as the “O Sacrum Convivium” says.

▼ **Section Three: St. Thomas on the Mass and Answers to Our Questions**

▼ **St. Thomas, the Mass, and Terminology**

- St. Thomas considers the Mass as the final question in his examination of the Eucharist as a sacrament. For him, the Mass is like the “rite” that surrounds the sacramental action itself (just as we have the rite of Baptism that surrounds the actual pouring of the water).
 - But it would be a mistake to think of the Mass as something extraneous to the sacrament itself. Rather, for St. Thomas, it forms an integral part of the sacrament because it unfolds and specifies the meaning of the action. So, if we are thinking with St. Thomas, we want to consider the Mass also as “the sacrament.”
 - Obviously, the presence of Christ in the host perdures after the “Ite, missa est,” and the Church uses various terms to signify this. So, confusion can arise on the level of terminology. For example, we typically signify Christ’s presence in the host by the term “Eucharist”, and the whole action by the term “Sacrifice of the Mass.”
 - But when we are speaking and thinking about this more precisely (as we are now), we don’t want to let these distinct terms separate things in our mind.
- ▼ As we have seen from St. Thomas, it is the “Christus passus” (Christ who has suffered) who is really present. The Eucharist will always have this intimate connection with Christ’s sacrificial act.

- As one spiritual author puts it (speaking more mystically than theologically, but still): “We receive in the Eucharist not just the presence of Our Lord, but the presence of the *Passion* of Jesus Christ crucified into our soul... The union is always with Jesus Christ *crucified*. We can never separate the reception of the Eucharist from a real encounter, an encounter by touch, with the wounds of Our Lord. This union with Him by means of His crucified body and blood has a serious spiritual implication. The reception of the Eucharist is meant to draw us closer to the sacrificial Passion of Christ.”

From “Conversion” by Fr. Daniel Haggerty, p.218

▼ Now let’s address our questions about the Mass, with St. Thomas

▼ How is the Mass first and foremost a sacrifice?

- This should now be clear: the Mass is the sacrament, and a sacrament is a sign and cause. What is being signified and caused here? The presence of Christ immolated.
- It is therefore to make present His sacrifice that Christ comes down upon the altar under the species of bread and wine.
- This is so wrapped up with the Eucharist that even as Our Lord’s presence continues, it reminds us of the sacrifice. There is no presence of Our Lord without His sacrifice of the Cross “renewed” on the altar at Mass.
- We could say further, with another theological author, “The sacramental sign of the Mass reproduces that of the Last Supper... [and] whereas the rite of the Last Supper was in sign, both [the] commencement and prefiguration [of Christ’s Pasch on Good Friday], that of the Mass is the renewal, in the same sign, of the totality of the mystery, begun at the Last Supper and consummated on the Cross, in view of the accomplishment by and in the Church.”

From “The Holy Eucharist – The World’s Salvation”, Joseph de Saint-Marie, pp.344-5

- ▼ Here we see the intimate connection of the Last Supper, the Cross on Good Friday, and the Mass. They are all the “totality of the mystery” in different “phases” so to speak, so that only one clean and perfect oblation might be offered perpetually (as Trent says, quoting Malachias 1:11, “For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”

- This can *only* mean Christ's sacrifice, for every other sacrifice could not be worth anything unless it were in some way connected with Christ's offering of Himself to the Father.
- ▼ **What does the word "re-present" mean when Trent uses it to describe the sacrifice of the Mass?**
- Earlier, when posing the question, I quoted St. Augustine: "[Christ is immolated daily in the sacrament.](#)"
 - Such an expression is equivalent to saying that the sacrifice of the Mass "re-presents" the sacrifice on the Cross. Trent will also use the expression "in an unbloody manner."
 - This "unbloody manner" is nothing other than the *sacramental* manner, i.e. a sign that effects what it signifies.
 - The double consecration makes Christ really present, yet as *immolated*, because there is a separation of the Body and the Blood under the species of bread and wine.
 - "Re-present" therefore means that the very same sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is (so to speak) "acted out" again on our altars, yet as a *sacrament*, and therefore without a *new* death of Christ, without a *new* shedding of blood.
 - It is a real sacrifice because the sacrament really does make present what it signifies, and this sacrament does indeed signify Christ's sacrifice – that was the whole reason that Christ instituted it.
- ▼ St. Thomas will say two things that are quite striking and that can complete our answer:
- Illa Q79, a7, corpus *and* ad 1: "[This sacrament is not only a sacrament, but also a sacrifice.](#)" *and* "[This sacrament stands out from others in that it is a sacrifice.](#)"
 - Illa Q83, a1, corpus: "[It is proper to this sacrament that, in its celebration, Christ be immolated.](#)"
 - So we have a true, sacramental immolation (i.e. not bloody), that both commemorates and renews the sacrifice of Calvary.
- ▼ **How should we understand the sacramental and meal aspects of the Mass?**
- ▼ The Mass is a sacrifice insofar as it is a sacrament, and the most perfect of all the sacraments:

- It is only through the incredible sacramental mode that God will renew the sacrifice of His Son, and that mode precisely ensures that it is no new sacrifice that happens, but the very same sacrifice: same priest, same victim, same oblation, only the manner of offering being different.
 - As a note here, too: through the sacraments, the priest partakes of the very power of God. As we read in Genesis, God, when creating, says, “Let light be made,” and the words accomplish that very thing. So, too, in the sacraments, the priest makes a statement with words, and by that statement (by that *sign*), there is accomplished what the words mean: “This is My Body.”
- ▼ The Mass has the aspect of a meal, but it is only a meal insofar as it is sacrifice, and through eating, those attending partake of the sacrifice.
- Fr. Reuter has explained this in detail in his podcast.
 - We have also seen the truth of this theologically: I am receiving the *Christus passus* when I receive Holy Communion. I come into contact with the sacrifice of the Cross and am united with Christ offering Himself for the salvation of the world.
 - Such an eating confirms me as a partaker of the New Covenant and joins me more intimately to the Mystical Body of Christ.

▼ Final Words

- We do not and cannot remove the deep mystery that surrounds our faith when we examine things theologically. Rather, we seek to understand what we can and grow in an appreciation of just how deep the mystery is.
- As St. Anselm says so well, theology is “faith seeking understanding.”
- Such a seeking can only increase our wonder and our gratitude towards God, who has done such miraculous things to be close to us and to remain with us until the end of time.