

# COMMON CATHOLIC PRAYERS

## THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

**I**N THE NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**O** UR FATHER who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## THE HAIL MARY

**H**AIL MARY, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

## THE DOXOLOGY

**G**LORY BE TO THE FATHER, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I** BELIEVE IN GOD, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

## ACT OF FAITH

**O** MY GOD, I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I believe that Thy Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

## ACT OF HOPE

**O** MY GOD, relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

## ACT OF LOVE

**O** MY GOD, I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

## ACT OF CONTRITION

**O** MY GOD, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, My God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

## BLESSING BEFORE MEALS

**B**LESS US, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## GRACE AFTER MEALS

**W**E GIVE THEE THANKS for all Thy benefits, O Almighty God, who livest and reignest forever; and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

## THE MEMORARE

**R**EMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but, in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

## PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

**A**NGEL OF God, my guardian dear, To whom God's love entrusts me here, Ever this day be at my side, To light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

## THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

### *The Five Joyful Mysteries*

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Birth of Our Lord
4. The Presentation of Our Lord
5. The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple

### *The Five Sorrowful Mysteries*

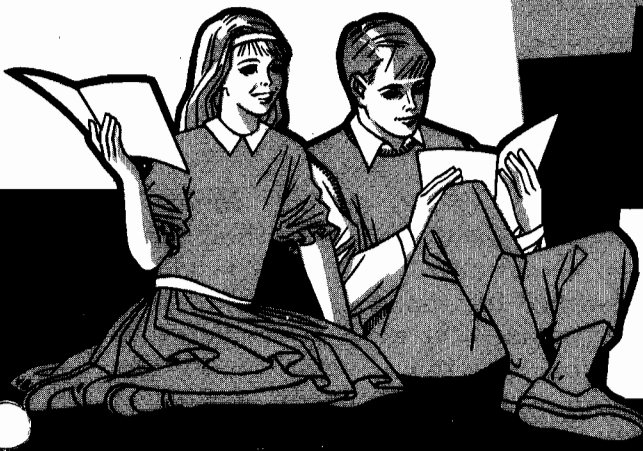
1. The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord

### *The Five Glorious Mysteries*

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Ghost
4. The Assumption of our Blessed Mother into Heaven
5. The Coronation of Our Blessed Mother

## PRAYER BEFORE A CRUCIFIX

**L**OOK DOWN UPON ME, O good and gentle Jesus, while before Thy face I humbly kneel, and with burning soul pray and beseech Thee to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment; the while I contemplate with great love and tender pity Thy five wounds, pondering over them within me, calling to mind the words which David Thy prophet said of Thee, my Good Jesus: "They have pierced My hands and My feet; they have numbered all my bones."



## TESTING A FALSE GOD

### THEME

**T**ODAY'S READING gives us the perfect example of a "God vs god" contest. The Biblical writer wants to assure the Israelites that their faith must be placed in the true God — the only God. Elias is the man chosen by God to challenge the followers of Baal.

### READING

**E**LIAS THE PROPHET said to his people, "If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if Baal (a false god) is the Lord, then follow him."

And Elias said, "I only remain a prophet of the Lord. But there are many prophets of Baal. Let them kill a calf and lay it on wood but put no fire under it. And I will kill a calf and do the same. You pray to your gods and I will pray to my God. And the God that shall answer with fire shall be God." And the people agreed to the test.

Then Elias said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose yourselves a calf and prepare it first, because you are many. And call on the names of your gods, but put no fire under it." And they took the calf which he gave them and prepared the animal, and they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no voice to answer them.

And Elias kidded the prophets of Baal, saying, "Cry with a louder voice, for perhaps your god is talking or is on a journey or is asleep." So they cried out louder. And they became angry when their gods did not answer and their prayers were not regarded.

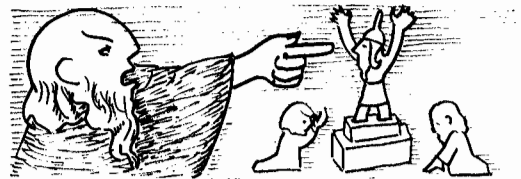
In the afternoon Elias told the people to

come to him. He built an altar from twelve stones, which was the number of the tribes of Israel. Then Elias dug a trench around the altar and laid wood on top. Then he put the calf on the wood. Finally, he poured buckets of water over the offering until the trench filled.

When it was time to offer the sacrifice, Elias the prophet said, "O Lord God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel, show us that You are the God of Israel. Hear me, O Lord, that these people may learn You are the Lord."

Then the fire of the Lord came down and burnt the wood and stones and dust and even the water in the trench. When the people saw this, they said, "The Lord is God, the Lord is God." And later Elias killed the prophets of Baal.

Now Jezabel heard all that Elias had done, and she sent a message to him, saying, "I will make your life as the lives of the prophets you killed." And Elias was afraid. He went into the desert where an angel of the Lord said to him, "Arise and eat, for you have a long way to go." And Elias arose and walked forty days and nights to Mount Horeb.



### PRAYER

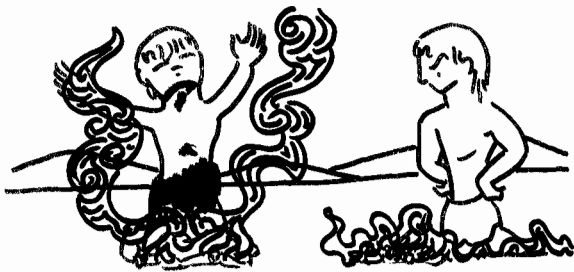
Make my faith strong in time of trial, Lord. Help me to follow Your Will in whatever circumstances I find myself throughout life.

# TYPES OF THE EUCHARIST

**YOU ARE WELL AWARE** that all forms of living things require food for their life. Whether they be plants, animals, or men, living things will quickly die if their strength is not renewed regularly with the food that is suited to them. How long do you think you would remain alive if you stopped eating? How long could you continue performing your usual activities?

We can compare this need for food in our physical life to our need for strengthening in our spiritual life—the life of Christ within us. We believe that a new life was given to us by Jesus through His sacrament of Baptism. And because He gave His life to us, He also gave us the food to continually strengthen and develop it. That food is the greatest of all the sacraments—Holy Eucharist. In it Jesus gives us His Own Body and Blood for our life—“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.”

We will study this great sacrament from two different approaches in the next two lessons: as a *sacrifice* and as a *meal*. For this sacrament is not only important to us as our spiritual food, but it is also the greatest offering we can make to God in sacrifice and the greatest bond of unity we can experience with other Christians. For the moment, however, we will examine the way in which God led His Chosen People to an appreciation of what this sacrament would mean.

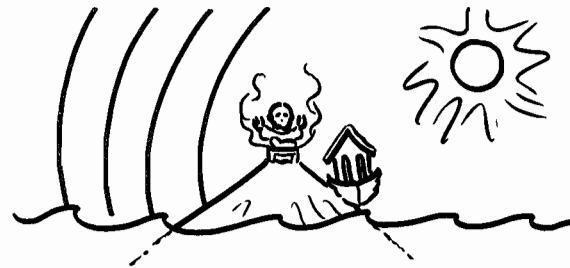


*Sacrifice of Abel*

## OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

“Look with favor on these offerings. Accept them as you did the gifts of your just servant, Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your priest Melchisedech.” Thus the priest at Mass prays to God just after the Consecration. Each name mentioned recalls offerings made to God that were preparations for the greatest sacrifice of all, the Eucharist.

Abel’s sacrifice of an animal would be followed by the Jewish people in their sacrifices of animal blood. Abraham was willing even to sacrifice his son if God commanded it, for he recognized the need of obedience to the God Who was the Creator of all life. Melchisedech offered an unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine—the same materials used by Jesus at the Last Supper and by the Church today.



*Sacrifice of Noe*

The Jews who came after Abraham placed their offering of an animal on an altar as a sign that they placed themselves completely in God’s hands. Burning the animal in sacrifice was meant to show that they were ready to give themselves up totally to God, even to the extent of death. And eating the flesh of the animal after the sacrifice showed the close bond that existed between God and His Chosen People.

## LAMB AND MANNA

The greatest of all the Jewish sacrifices took place during the Paschal ceremonies. Each year every Jewish family repeated the event that had freed their ancestors from slavery in Egypt: the sacrifice and eating of a lamb. It was the blood of the lamb that had saved them from death in Egypt, and God had demanded that the same Passover Sacrifice and Meal be repeated every year. We recall this event when we call Jesus the “Lamb of God,” for He has freed us from the slavery of sin. And we, too, are commanded to repeat His Sacrifice—“Do this in commemoration of Me.”

After being freed from Egypt by the sacrifice and meal, the Jews were sustained in the desert by a food they called manna. This “food from heaven” was God’s way of assisting them to remain strong in their journey to the Promised Land. It was another example of God’s use of food as a sign of His love for His People and of His union with them.



*Sacrifice of Melchisedec*

**SUMMARY**

The Old Testament describes many sacrifices made to God by the Jewish people. The Passover Sacrifice-Meal and God's gift of the manna in the desert help us to understand the importance to us today of the Holy Eucharist as our spiritual food.

All these events described in the Old Testament can help us see the meaning and value of the Holy Eucharist in our lives today. "He who eats this bread," Jesus said, "will live forever." It is this life of Christ within us that must be nourished and strengthened. As human beings we recognize and satisfy our need for food; as Christians we must also recognize and satisfy our need for the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ the Lord.



*Sacrifice of Abraham*

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why does the sacrifice made by Melchisedec look forward to the Mass?

---



---



---

2. Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God?

---



---



---

3. In what sense is it correct to call the Eucharist a food?

---



---



---

**FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

Refer back to Lesson 602 and be ready to report on the events of the first Passover night.

SCOPE (Junior Edition) is a version of SCOPE for elementary grades. Joseph G. O'Brien, Publisher. Lawrence Matthews, Editor. Published weekly, 32 times per year, during the school year, except for the Christmas and Easter recess. Individual subscriptions \$2.50. Bulk rate available on request. Second class postage paid at Peoria, Illinois. Copyright 1968, J. G. O'Brien Co., Peoria, Illinois 61601. Published with Ecclesiastical Permission.

## WHAT THEY ASK US . . .

**Why do we say at Mass, "Lamb of God WHO TAKE AWAY the sins of the world"? It sounds funny, although I suppose it isn't wrong.**

You are correct in saying that it is not wrong, but you are also right in saying that it does sound "funny." In order to understand this part of the prayer correctly (and it is a prayer), you must insert one word into it that is taken for granted: "Lamb of God, You Who take away . . ." Now it sounds better, doesn't it? Think of it that way the next time you say the prayer; it will gradually lose the sound of strangeness.

**I have never understood how Cain and Abel could have continued the human race. Is this all just a story?**

It is held by most Biblical scholars today that the prehistorical parts of the Bible are mythical. This does not mean that there is no basis for believing the truths contained in those parts of the Bible, for the Bible is God's Word to man. But the truths taught by the writers were placed in a setting of prehistory about which they could have known little or nothing at all.

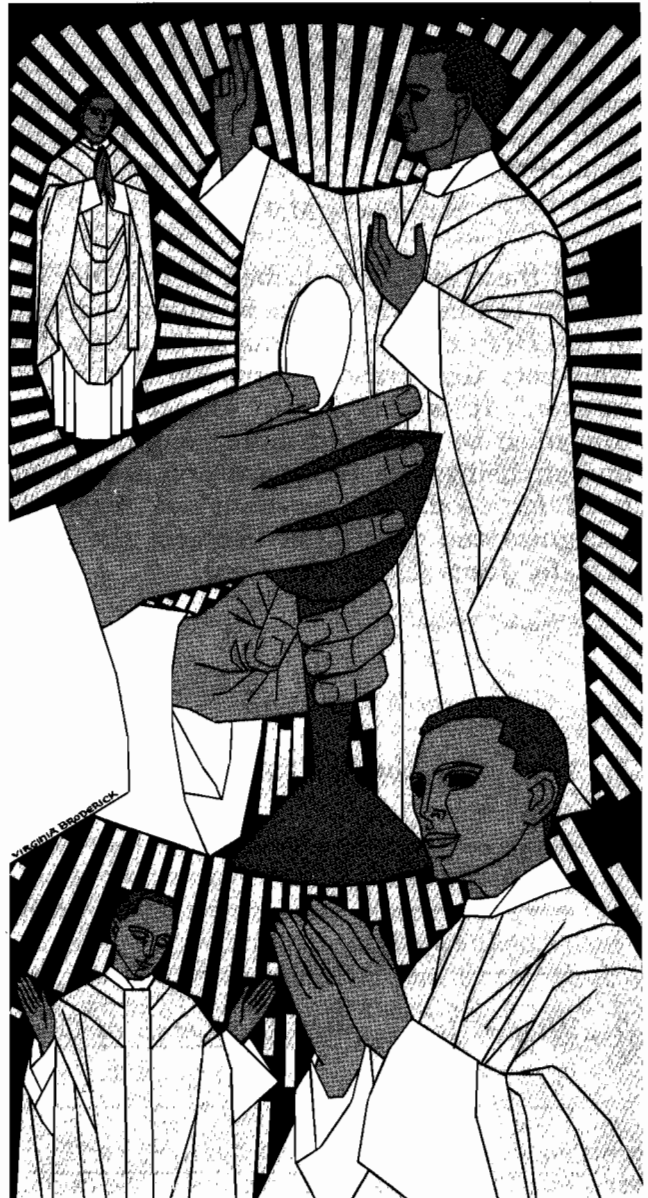
Earlier generations thought that the Biblical writers were given special information from God about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noe, and other prehistoric figures. But today it is thought more likely that their knowledge in these matters was as limited as that of their neighbors. God relied on the human minds and imaginations of the Biblical writers themselves to express His truths.

**Why should anyone want to kill an animal as a sacrifice?**

The idea of bloody sacrifice is much less appealing to people today than to earlier cultures. The Jewish people took it for granted that God wished them to make such offerings. Your question that challenges the value of such sacrifice would not have occurred to them.

Whatever your personal feelings may be about animal sacrifice, it is true that man has always had a need to express his worship of God in some material way. Man needs to worship not only in thought, but in visible, realistic action. And because man was so dependent on animals for food and work, it was natural to select an animal as a sign of his sincerity in making the sacrifice. The destruction of the animal by fire was required to show that man was serious about what he was doing.

It is difficult to imagine such animal sacrifice in our worship of God today. Yet the ideas of sacrifice and worship remain valid for men of all ages.

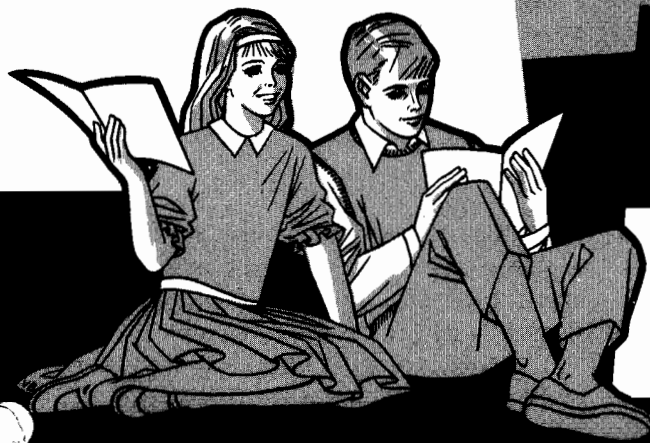


*Can you name the parts of the Mass in which the priest makes the gestures pictured above?*

**Why doesn't the priest genuflect anymore before raising the host at the Consecration of the Mass?**

Part of the renewal of the liturgy currently taking place in the Church involves the elimination of words and actions that are not needed. You may have noticed, for example, that the priest at the altar makes far fewer signs of the cross over the host and wine than he did in the past. In the same way, the number of genuflections has been reduced, including the elimination of the one you mention before the host and chalice are raised at the Consecration.

I hope you find the Mass of today more meaningful and understandable than its earlier form. If so, the liturgical changes have been helpful. But if not, it may be that the form of the Mass needs still more adaptation, and that you may need more prayerful study of what the Mass is and means in your life.



## PROPHETS AND KINGS

### THEME

**T**HE PEOPLE of Israel are frequently ruled by other nations and persecuted by them. God continues to send His prophets to Israel, but not to lead the people against their enemies.

### READING

**E**LISEUS CAME to Damascus and found the King of Syria was sick. The people told the king, "The man of God has come here."

The king said to Hazael, "Take some presents with you and go to meet the man of God. And talk with the Lord through him, saying, 'Can I recover from the illness I have?'"

And Hazael went to meet Eliseus, the man of God. And he took with him presents and all the good things of the city of Damascus, so that forty camels were weighted down. And when he stood before Eliseus, Hazael said, "Your son the King of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Can I recover from this illness I have?'"

And Eliseus said to him, "Tell him that he shall recover. But the Lord has shown me that he will surely die." And Eliseus stood with him and was troubled so much that he blushed; and the man of God wept.

And Hazael said to Eliseus the man of God, "Why does my lord weep?"

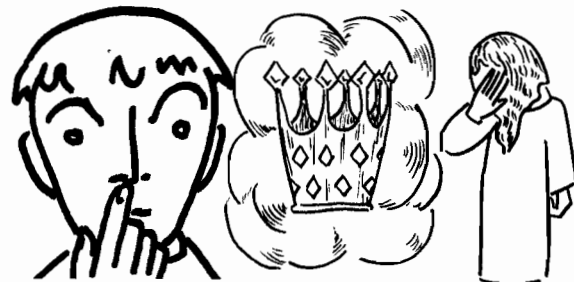
And Eliseus said, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel. Their strong cities you will burn with fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; you will hurt their children and will harm their women."

And Hazael said, "But am I a dog? How could I do those things?" And Eliseus said, "The Lord has shown me that you will be King of Syria."

And when Hazael returned home, he told the king, "You shall recover." But the next day the king took a blanket and put it over his face and died. And Hazael ruled over Syria in place of him.

Later Joram ruled for eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the ways of the King of Israel. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. But the Lord would not destroy the kingdom of Juda for the sake of David the servant of the Lord.

In those days the land of Edom revolted against the rule of Juda, and so made its own king. And Joram came to the city and all the chariots with him. And he arose in the night and defeated the people of Edom, but some of the people fled into their tents. Thus Edom revolted against Juda, and remains separate to this day.



### PRAYER

How often I become upset because of small problems caused by the people around me! Help me to better understand Your message, Lord, and to strive to do Your Will at all times.

# THE PERFECT OFFERING

**A**LL PEOPLE have a great desire and need to express their feelings by words, actions, and things. We are all familiar with the joy of receiving presents on our birthday; we are also familiar with the joy of giving a present we have made or purchased with our own money. Such a gift is an expression—a sign—of our love and appreciation of the person who gives it. And when the gift is accepted by the other person, it is a sign that he accepts the love and appreciation it signifies.

True gift-giving is an act of an unselfish person. By this act the person gives away something he values; it is a sacrifice for him to give it up. But he does so freely, for he wishes the other person to be pleased. The child who buys a tie for his father with the money he has saved over a long period of time is giving a present that is worth far more than the money it cost.

## THE OFFERING OF JESUS

Because man is a creature of God and has received everything he has from God, he naturally wishes to express his thanks in some kind of gift. We have seen how the People of Israel offered gifts to God—sacrifices, they were called. Their gifts were food or animals, since this was the best way they knew to show God that they offered themselves completely to Him. But with the coming of the Messiah into the world, God established a perfect offering, a perfect sacrifice: the sacrifice of His Own Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus told the people with whom He lived that one day He would make a sacrifice to His Father on their behalf. He told them that His sacrifice would benefit all of mankind, not only the Jews. When He was baptized, John the Baptist spoke of Him as the Lamb of God. And now this perfect man would offer Himself as the perfect lamb in sacrifice.

The sacrifice of Jesus was offered on the cross. This was the one perfect gift to the Father, the one perfect offering that fully expressed man's desire to worship God, to ask His mercy, to thank Him for all His many blessings. But Jesus did not want His sacrifice to end there. He did not want it to be merely remembered as a thing of the past. No, He willed that His followers should themselves participate in His sacrifice until the end of time. How? Through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

## OUR GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Jesus has willed that we Christians should re-present the same sacrifice He made on Calvary—the sacrifice of His body and blood—in a sacramental way through the use of signs. His blood would not be physically shed again; His body would not hang from the cross again. But in a mysterious yet real way, Christ re-offers Himself to the Father for us on the altar at Mass. And as His followers we have the supreme dignity of being able to unite with Him as the perfect sacrifice is made to the Father.

Can you see the great opportunity we all have? We as sinful beings are unable to find a gift that would be totally satisfying to the God we wish to worship. “What can I give to the Lord for all the good things He has given to me?”—so prays the priest at the Communion of the Mass. Only Jesus Himself could give us this acceptable gift, because only He was both God and man. United to Him we are joined with the Priest Who offers and with the Victim Who is sacrificed.



## OUR GIFT BECOMES FOOD

But this is not yet the end of the wonder of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Not only does God accept our sacrifice, but He returns it to us as our spiritual food. The signs of the sacrifice (bread and wine) are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Not only, then, has Jesus given us the means to offer an acceptable gift to God, but He has also made that gift into our Bread of Life—"He who eats My body and drinks My blood has everlasting life."

If there is one word that can sum up the attitude we should have in response to this tremendous gift of God, it is *thanksgiving*. And that is what the word Eucharist means—thanksgiving. Although we may sometimes forget it, we know we owe a lifetime of thanks to God for all He has done for us. There is no way this thanks could be better expressed than through the sacrifice of Holy Eucharist.



### SUMMARY

Although it is natural for people to offer gifts to one another as signs of love, there is nothing sinful man could find to offer that would be pleasing to God. But God has willed that the sacrifice of His Son on the cross should be continued in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. And the signs of that sacrifice, bread and wine, are returned to man as his spiritual food, the Body and Blood of Christ.

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How would you define a gift?

---

---

---

2. Why is the Eucharist the perfect gift to God?

---

---

---

3. How do we participate in the sacrifice of Jesus to the Father?

---

---

---

### FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Be ready to explain the differences between Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His sacrifice of Himself in the Eucharist.



## WHAT THEY ASK US . . .

### A Protestant church near our school has Mass on Sunday that is just like ours.

You are probably referring to an Episcopal church, for the Episcopal Sunday service is a Mass, and its form is very much like the Catholic Mass. The Episcopalians think of themselves as Catholics, not Protestants; they think of their church as a branch of the one true Church, and the Roman Catholic Church as another branch.

Most Protestant churches have some form of communion service in which the members of the congregation eat a host and drink some kind of grape juice or wine. The idea of the Eucharist as a memorial of Christ and a sign of unity among Christians is held by most Christian churches. But the idea of the Eucharist as the unbloody sacrifice of Jesus is denied by many.

### I can't imagine why a person wouldn't accept a gift.

Maybe there will never be a time when you will feel required to refuse a gift, but there are occasions when people do feel this way. Some people will not accept a gift from a person they feel is their enemy or is doing them wrong in some way. Accepting his gift, they think, would be the same as stating that they no longer disapprove of his actions. And a girl may refuse a present from her boy friend if it is too expensive, for she might feel that by accepting it she is also accepting a serious relationship with him which she does not want.

People involved in business and government can get in serious trouble by accepting gifts too freely. You may have heard of congressmen who have been criticized for accepting gifts. Their critics think that in doing so the legislator is going to have to do something "extra" in return for the present—and that something extra may be illegal.

### A rich man doesn't make any sacrifices when he gives a gift.

By sacrifice you apparently mean something that really "hurts"—the way it might hurt you to give away money to a charity instead of spending it on yourself. But you must remember that there is more to a gift than the money it costs. The gift that costs the least may be given with the most loving spirit.

You should apply this truth to your sacrifice in the Eucharist. To come to church with no real desire or interest in worshipping God is not to make much of an offering—even though the offering itself is the sacrifice of Jesus. Each Christian must bring himself to the sacrifice, or else he is only going through the motions.



*Recently an English translation of the Bible was produced jointly by the Catholic Church and many Protestant churches. Let us pray for the day when the Lord's Body may be eaten in common.*

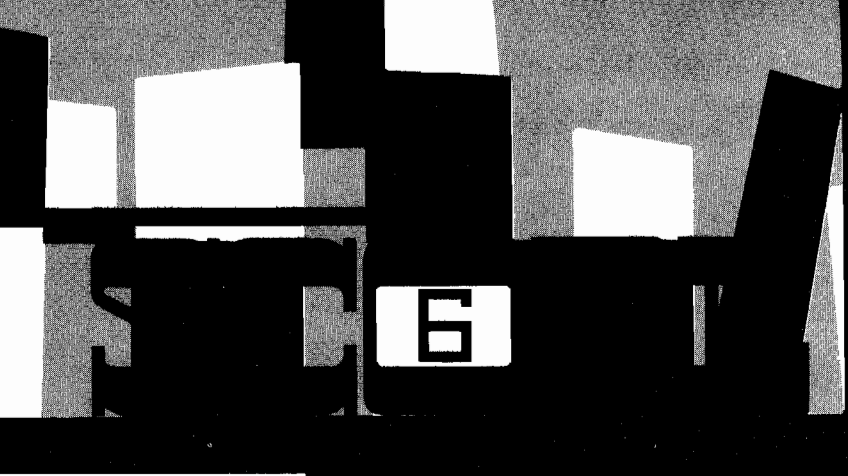
### Why aren't Catholics supposed to receive communion at other churches?

There are two reasons usually given by the Church:

(1) The host distributed at Protestant churches is not truly the Body of Christ. Many of those churches, in fact, do not believe in the Eucharist as the Body of Christ; to them, it is only a remembrance of something in the past, not a reality in the present. Only the Catholic Church can re-offer the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross in a sacramental way through the action of its ordained priests.

(2) By participating in such services a Catholic would give the impression that he thinks the bread he eats is actually the Body of Christ. This can only result in confusion and scandal to both Catholics and non-Catholics, and should therefore be avoided.

There is today a desire among many Catholics and many Protestants to find ways to overcome the things that prevent them from sharing the Eucharist. It may well be that in future years Christians will receive the Body of Christ together.



## SOLOMON'S RISE AND FALL

### THEME

**S**OLOMON'S WISDOM brings him to a high point of fame and fortune. The admiration of the world is shown by the visit of the Queen of Sheba. But as Solomon grows old he turns his back on that same wisdom, falling instead under the spell of false gods.

### READING

**T**HE QUEEN OF SHEBA heard of the fame of Solomon and came to try him with hard questions. She entered Jerusalem with great riches and with camels that carried spices. She also brought gold and precious stones and came to King Solomon and spoke to him of all that she had in her heart. And Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing Solomon did not know or could not answer.

When the Queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, the house he had built, the food on his table, the servants and their clothes, and the sacrifices which he offered in the house of the Lord, she no longer had any spirit in her. She said, "The report about your words and wisdom is true. I did not believe those who told me until I came to see for myself with my own eyes. Your wisdom and works are even greater than your fame. Blessed are your men and your servants who stand before you and hear your wisdom. Blessed be the Lord your God Whom you have pleased, and Who has set you upon the throne of Israel. The Lord has loved Israel forever and has appointed you king to do judgment and justice." And then she gave Solomon much gold and spices and precious stones.

King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba

all that she desired and asked. And she returned and went into her own country with her servants.

King Solomon grew richer and richer. He was greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. All the earth desired to see Solomon's face and to hear the wisdom which God had given in his heart.

But when Solomon was very old, his heart was turned away from the Lord to follow strange gods. Solomon did things which displeased the Lord, and he did not obey Him as did David his father.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon because he did not keep His Commandments and worshipped false gods. So the Lord told him, "Because you have not kept My covenant, I will divide your kingdom. I will do it in the time of your son. I will take away your whole kingdom except for one tribe that I will give to your son for the sake of David and for Jerusalem which I have chosen."

And these things came to pass. Solomon ruled over Jerusalem and all Israel for forty years. When he died he was buried in the city of David, and his son Roboam ruled in his place.



### PRAYER

Not even the great wisdom of Solomon could completely overcome his temptations to evil. Give me strength, Lord, that I may not fall away from Your Will.

# CONTINUING CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

WE SAID in an earlier issue that Jesus is a mediator between God and man; in fact, that He is the Perfect Mediator. He acted while alive on earth (as He now acts alive in heaven) as the perfect representative of man with man's heavenly Father. We shall speak now of Christ's special representatives on earth—His ordained priests—who carry on His role of mediator until the end of time.

## VARIOUS TYPES OF PRIESTHOOD

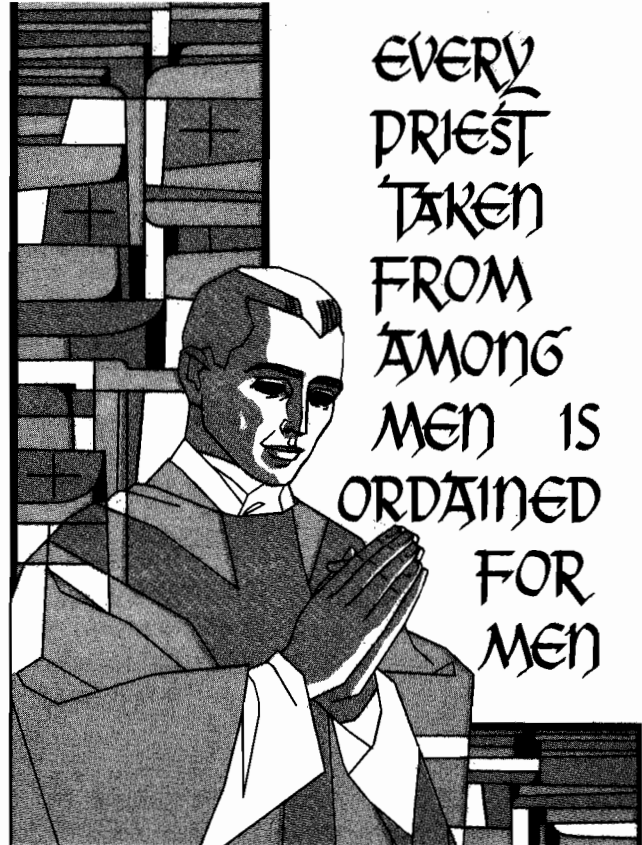
There has been some form of priesthood in human societies as far back as we have records of man's life on earth. Among pagan people the oldest member of each family often acted as mediator between his people and their God and offered sacrifice for them. In other places the leader of a tribe was anointed and considered a priest for all the people. Some kings, like the Egyptian pharaohs, were thought to be special friends of God, or even "sons" of God. Melchisedech was a famous pagan king mentioned in the Bible who offered a sacrifice of bread and wine to God.

The priesthood was an important element in the life of the Chosen People, too. On Mt. Sinai the great leader and priest of the Israelites, Moses, offered a sacrifice to God in thanksgiving for the gift of the Ten Commandments. Moses' brother Aaron was named head of a perpetual family of priests; from his descendants came the Jewish priests at the time of Jesus. Kings and judges like Solomon and David served as priests as well. All these priests of the Old Testament were types or models of the great priest who was yet to come, Jesus the Messiah.

## THE PERFECT PRIEST

The New Covenant established by Jesus has a new priesthood and a new sacrifice—one that is far superior to that of Aaron. Christ Himself is the perfect priest, the perfect mediator for God and man, because He is both God and man. The Israelite priests offered sacrifices for their own people, their own race, their own religion; but Christ acts as a priest for the whole human race. His life, death, and resurrection are priestly actions that save all of mankind.

Christ wished His priesthood to continue even after He died so that all men in all ages could be saved through Him. For this purpose He made priests of His apostles, sending



*St. Paul's definition of a priest is quoted in full on the back page of this issue.*

them out into the world to teach His message and save men from their sins. On the night before He died, Jesus gave His apostles (and their successors) a special share in His priesthood. After changing bread and wine into His Own Body and Blood, He said to His apostles, "Do this in commemoration of Me." Every Catholic priest in the world today takes his commission from this statement made by Jesus at the Last Supper.

## CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD CONTINUED

Now it should be remembered that in Baptism all Christians receive a new and eternal life and begin to share in Christ's work as members of His Church. But this Church is a community, a society of Christians, that requires organization and order to fulfill its role properly. Some Christians must have the power to speak and act in Christ's name; some must have the power to teach and rule and represent the rest of God's People in their worship of Him. It is in the sacrament of Holy Orders that a Christian receives the sacred power from Christ to perform these special roles.

Ordained priests, then — those with Orders — participate more fully than lay Christians in the worship of God. Given new powers through the action of the Holy Spirit, the ordained priest brings us Christ's life through the sacraments and the Mass. All Christians have the privilege of uniting themselves with Christ at the Mass and offering themselves with Him to the Father. But it is the unique privilege of the priest at the altar to represent us in offering our gifts of praise and thanks along with our petitions to the Father.

in Baptism. And now marked with the character of Holy Orders, the priest is a special sign of Christ Himself, continuing the Lord's work as mediator between God and man.

In a special sense, then, we can say that the priest is Christ living among us. We may see only an ordinary man in black clothing, but it is Christ Who works through Him to bring us the joy of God's love. The priest is a visible sign in the world of the Christ we all worship.

#### SUMMARY

The many types of priesthood found among early peoples were brought to perfection in the priesthood of Christ, the perfect mediator between God and man. The priests of today receive their authority and mission through the action of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Orders. All Christians thereby have a representative in their sacrifice of worship to God the Father in heaven.

Through Holy Orders the priest receives the third of the permanent characters that mark him as a follower of Christ. In Baptism a priest poured water over your forehead and made the sign of the cross with oil, but it was really Christ Who gave you a new life. In Confirmation the bishop anointed you as a prophet of the Church, but it was Christ Who sent the Holy Spirit to perfect the life begun

1. How is the sacrament of Holy Orders similar to Baptism and Confirmation?

---

---

---

2. What does it mean to call the priest a MEDIATOR?

---

---

---

3. With what words did Jesus give His apostles and their successors a special power of priesthood?

---

---

---

Read the words of consecration in the canon of the Mass. How are the words, "Do this in commemoration of Me," translated?

Read the words of consecration in the canon of the Mass. How are the words, "Do this in commemoration of Me," translated?

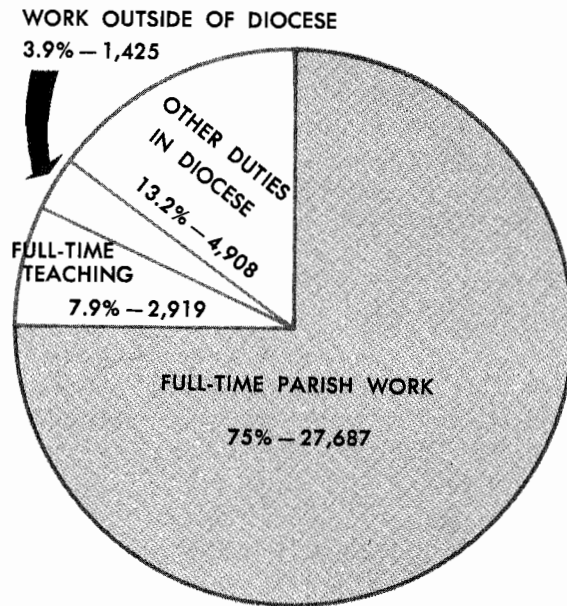
# WHAT THEY ASK US . . .

## Did the priests in the early Church do the same things as our priests today?

St. Paul (or one of his disciples) wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews before the end of the first century. Here is how he describes a Christian priest:

"Every priest is chosen from among men and appointed to serve men in what concerns the worship of God. He is to offer gifts and sacrifices in expiation of sins. He knows how to deal gently and bear with the ignorant and wayward, since he too is enveloped in weakness. For this very reason he is bound to offer sacrifices in expiation of his own sins as well as those of his people. Moreover, a man does not assume this dignity for himself, but he is called to it as was Aaron."

You can see from this description of a priest in the early Church that his principal mission was the same then as now: to represent the people in the worship of God by offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. And as St. Paul points out, the priest is like all other men in his need of forgiveness, for he too is a sinner. We should remember that fact when we are tempted to demand that a priest be super-human in everything he does.



Diocesan priests in the United States work in the ways shown above.

	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1965-1967	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%
Total Catholics								-----	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Total Religious								-----	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Seminarians								-----	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Seminaries								-----	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

This graph of the Church in the United States points out the decline in vocations. The line for Total Religious includes priests, brothers, and nuns.

## Are there fewer boys studying for the priesthood now than in past years?

There has been in recent years a decrease in the number of priests ordained in most countries—and in all countries of North America, South America, and Europe. And although there are some exceptions to the following statement, there is a general decline in the number of students studying for the priesthood in the seminaries of these countries. It is not unusual to read of the closing of a seminary due to the lack of a sufficient number of candidates.

Many sociologists feel that the decline in vocations to the priesthood will level off and come back up in the future. Whether this is true remains to be seen. Certainly it is more necessary than ever to pray for an increase in vocations to the religious life.

## What does a person have to do to become a priest?

I'm sure you know that the boy who wishes to become a priest must go through a long process of education and training—about as much as a doctor or lawyer, which is several years beyond college. I might add that older men may also become priests by attending special schools for "late vocations."

The extent of your training before ordination depends on whether you enter a religious order or become a diocesan (secular) priest. You are probably more familiar with diocesan priests, since they operate most of the parishes in the United States and Canada. But if you wish to become a Jesuit, a Franciscan, or a priest in any other religious order, you will have to fulfill their educational demands, which vary from one order to another.

## What special powers do nuns have?

If you are thinking in terms of the powers given by the Holy Spirit at the ordination of a priest, the nun receives none of them. A nun is not "ordained" in that sense; she receives no sacrament of the Church when she takes the vows that bind her to a life within a religious community. Although a nun is a member of a religious order, she does not have the authority or the functions of a priest.

Nuns, of course, are Christians dedicated to a special mission and way of life. They accept the requirements of the religious community they enter in order to serve Christ and His Church in a specialized way. Untold numbers of people have been educated, counseled, and cared for by the members of the many religious orders of nuns throughout the world. Without question, the world is greatly indebted to its nuns.