



LESSON NINETEEN

# The Mass: We Worship God

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# Opening Prayer

## Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas Before Mass

*“Almighty and everlasting God,  
behold I come to the Sacrament of Thine only-begotten Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ:  
I come as one infirm to the physician of life,  
as one unclean to the fountain of mercy,  
as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness,  
as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. ...  
O most loving Father, give me grace to behold forever  
Thy beloved Son with His face at last unveiled,  
whom I now purpose to receive under the sacramental veil  
here below.”*

*Amen.*



# Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Understand the significance of the Mass as both sacrifice and sacred meal, a real participation in Christ's saving sacrifice and a sacred banquet where we receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
- ❖ Explore the historical origins and development of the Mass, tracing its Jewish roots and early Christian gatherings, and recognize its structure and universal nature across rites.
- ❖ Understand why Sunday Mass attendance is obligatory for Catholics and reflect on the difference between attending Mass as an obligation and participating in it as an encounter with Christ and his Church.

# BURNING QUESTIONS

- ❖ If God is everywhere, why do I need to go to Mass to worship? Can't I just pray at home or in nature?

*What is different about worshipping him at Mass? Why do you think Jesus taught us to worship him in a certain way? Does it matter that we do it together?*

- ❖ Why do we keep changing position during Mass—sitting, standing, kneeling? Is it really necessary? *Why might the Church ask us to change position throughout the Mass? Can prayer be done through our bodies as well as our minds?*

# St. Carlo Acutis

**Feast Day: October 12**

Lived: May 3, 1991 – October 12, 2006 · London, England · Patron of Youth, Programmers, the Internet

Born in 1991 and raised in Milan, Carlo was much like other boys his age. He played soccer, liked video games, and was gifted with computers. But his heart was captivated by Jesus in the Eucharist. Since his First Communion, Carlo attended Mass daily. He used his digital skills to create a website cataloging Eucharistic miracles from around the world, wanting others to see what he had come to treasure. At fifteen, he was diagnosed with an aggressive leukemia. He offered his suffering for the pope and the Church. He died in 2006. He was canonized by Pope Leo XIV in 2025, becoming the first millennial to be declared a saint. His body, which remains incorrupt, is enshrined in Assisi.



*“The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.”*

St. Carlo Acutis

# What Is the Mass?

## Heaven and Earth Meet

The Catholic Mass is the Church's highest form of prayer. In it, we participate in the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, made truly present for us in our own time. As the *Catechism* teaches, the Paschal Mystery "cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death ... and so transcends all times while being made present in them all" (CCC 1085).

## Sacrifice and Sacred Meal

The Mass is both sacrifice and sacred meal. It is the unbloody re-presentation of Calvary: Christ does not suffer again, but his one perfect self-offering is made truly present (see CCC 1366–1367). It is also the heavenly banquet where the faithful are fed with his Body and Blood and remain in communion with him throughout time: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).



*"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

1 Corinthians 11:26

# Origins and Development of the Mass

## Rooted in Scripture and Tradition

The roots of the Mass stretch back to Jewish liturgical tradition—especially the Passover. Early Christians celebrated the Eucharist “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7), incorporating readings from Scripture, a homily, and the breaking of bread, following the synagogue pattern. By around AD 150, St. Justin Martyr described a Sunday gathering structure that still shapes the Mass today.

## Substantially Unchanged

Pope Gregory the Great compiled the Roman Mass in the sixth century. The Council of Trent reaffirmed the real presence and the sacrificial nature of the Mass in the sixteenth century. The Second Vatican Council renewed the liturgy in the twentieth century. Through all these developments, the heart has remained: Christ offers himself to the Father for us and incorporates us in that offering.



*“They held steadfastly to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”*

*Acts 2:42*

# Walking Through the Mass

## Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word

The Mass begins with the entrance procession and the Sign of the Cross. The Penitential Act prepares our hearts. On Sundays and feasts, the Gloria follows. The Liturgy of the Word brings Old and New Testament readings, a psalm, and the Gospel—proclaimed by the priest or deacon as we stand in honor of Christ speaking to us. The homily, the Creed, and the Prayer of the Faithful complete this first part.

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites

The gifts of bread and wine are brought forward as offerings of ourselves. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the gifts are consecrated, making Christ truly present. We pray the Our Father, exchange the Sign of Peace, and receive Holy Communion. The Mass ends with a blessing and dismissal—*missa* in Latin—sending us to live what we have received.

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

Revelation 5:12

# Unity in Diversity

## A Variety of Liturgical Traditions

As the Catholic Church spread across continents and cultures, diverse liturgical traditions emerged, particularly in the East, all expressions of the same “deposit of faith.” While most Catholics celebrate the Roman Rite, the Church also honors other ancient rites, including Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean, and Maronite—all equally valid.

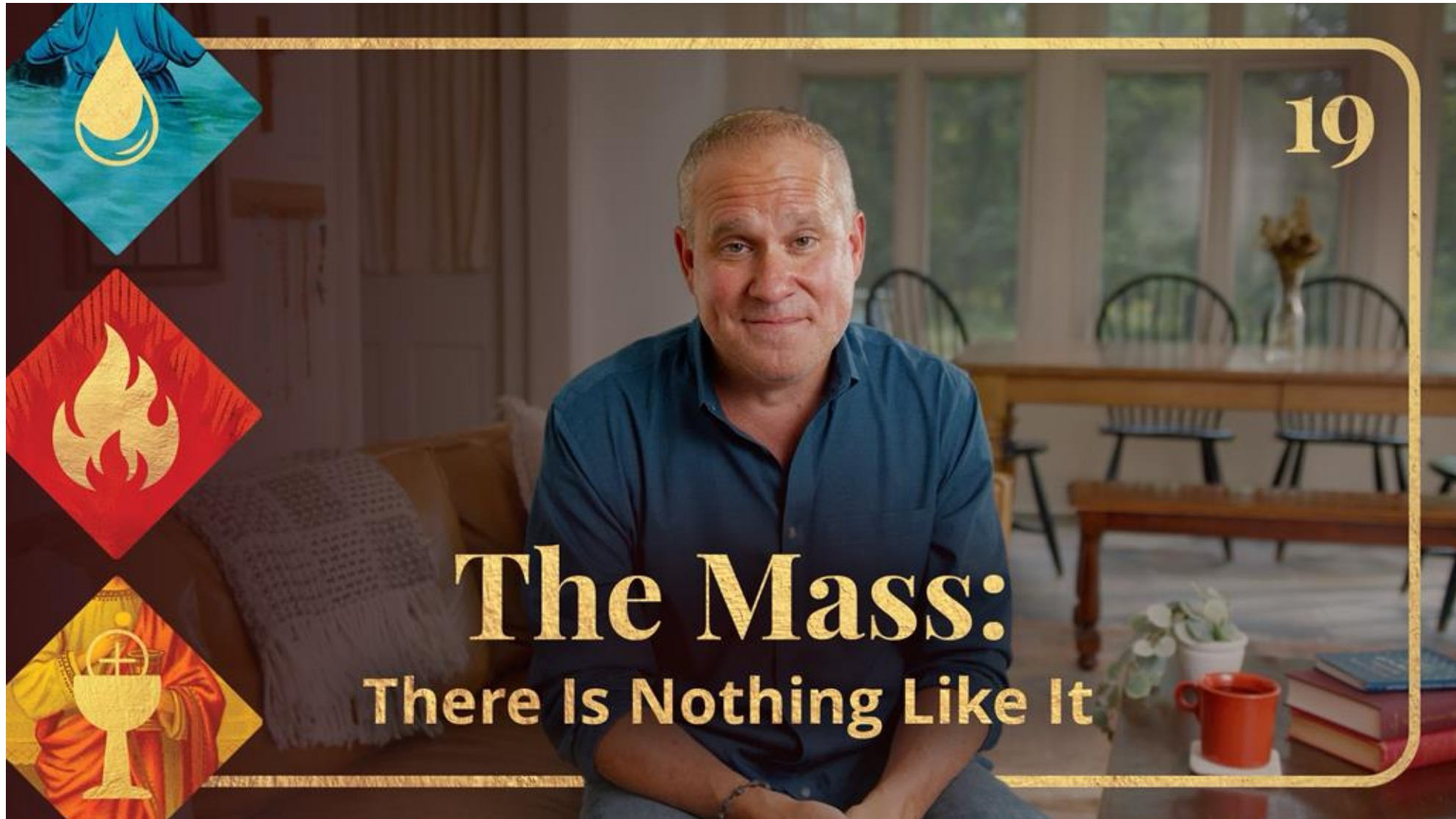


## Much More Than Obligation

Our relationship with God is indeed deeply personal. But it is never private. We are baptized into a Body, the Church. The obligation to attend Mass is not about checking a box. It is about remaining connected to the source of our life. To miss Mass is to miss that encounter.

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

Isaiah 6:3



## Discussion Questions

- ❖ Is there any aspect of the Mass that once seemed meaningless but now has taken on significance for you?
- ❖ How does this understanding of God working through physical matter (bread, wine) help you prepare your heart to receive the mysteries? What challenges you most about believing in this intimate, physical encounter with the divine?
- ❖ When you feel disconnected during Mass, how might remembering that you're entering into God's own design (not just human traditions) help you engage more fully with the Liturgy?

# Faith and Fun

You can usually tell the difference between a deacon and a priest by what they wear at Mass (i.e., their vestments). What is the difference?

a. Deacons wear white while priests wear green.

b. Deacons wear a stole diagonally. Priests wear it straight.

c. Deacons wear a beanie.

d. Priests carry a staff.

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A deacon wears his stole across his chest (from left shoulder to right side), while a priest wears it hanging straight down from both shoulders. A priest also wears a chasuble, while a deacon may wear a dalmatic. (For more information on priestly vestments, see Traditions and Treasures in Lesson Twenty-Two, p. 443.)

# The *Sanctus*

## The Hymn of the Angels

Near the height of the Eucharistic Prayer, the entire congregation joins their voices in the *Sanctus*, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” These words come from Isaiah's vision of the heavenly throne room (see Isaiah 6:3) and the crowd's acclamation of Jesus entering Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:9). At Mass, we join the angels and saints in a single, eternal act of praise.

## Heaven and Earth Unite

As the beginning of these sacred prayers, the *Sanctus* holds a central place in the Liturgy. In this moment, we glimpse something profound taking place just beyond what we can see: the heavens are opened, and the Church is filled with angels and saints joining us in worshipping the Paschal Lamb upon the altar.



## Living It Out:

Attend Mass this week. Though you cannot yet receive the Eucharist, you can pray an Act of Spiritual Communion (see the Closing Prayer of Lesson Eighteen on p. 218).

# Closing Prayer

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honor and glory and blessing! ...  
To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever  
and ever!” Amen.*

*(Revelation 5:12–13)*

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here