

“Why Catholic?” Mini-course – Week 3 Summary

We are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ that flows from His suffering, death, and resurrection. That event is called the Paschal Mystery

The Paschal Mystery then is the Fountain from which all saving graces flow. That Fountain of Grace was signified by the blood and water flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the Cross.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Liturgy (the Mass) and the Sacraments make this Fountain of Grace present here and now, that we may worship God the Father in the most perfect way and that Jesus may pour his life into our souls.

A Sacrament has two parts: the Matter and the Form

- The **matter** is the physical element (or the “sign”) of the sacrament.
- The **form** is the words or prayer used.

God prepared the world for this through the Old Testament.

In Exodus 17, God commanded Moses to take his staff and strike the rock that stood before them so that water would come out of it, that the people may drink.

In Numbers 20, God does something different. This time God commands Moses **not** to strike the rock but rather to **tell** the rock to yield its water.

In Exodus 17, the rock was struck and the water flowed.

In Numbers 20, the rock need not be struck again. Moses needed only to *speak the word* in the presence of the signs and the saving water would flow once again

The saving event in Exodus 17 was to be made present for the people in Numbers 20 through:

1. The Matter - the rock and the staff
2. The Form – the words Moses was to speak

So that what happened **in the past** would happen **once again**

- Through the sign and the word

This foreshadows the way in which the Mass and the sacraments work.

CCC 1103 [Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.](#)

A Memorial: For the Jews, a memorial meant much more than a simple calling to mind of a past event. In the biblical understanding of “memorial,” the past is not only remembered, but *relived*. The past was made present. So, the Jews celebrating the Passover at the time of Jesus thought of themselves as united with their ancestors in their flight from Egypt.

One Jewish commentator has explained that, “In every generation, a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt.” This understanding of “memorial” foreshadows and sheds light on our understanding of the Sacraments, which make present and effective in our lives the saving work of Christ.

The Sacraments in the New Testament

At Calvary in John 19:34, Jesus is the Rock that is struck by the lance of the Roman soldier and water and blood flow from His Sacred Heart. In the Mass that Saving Event is made present, but we need not strike the Rock again; Jesus is not sacrificed over and over again. The priest speaks the words of consecration in the presence of the signs of the bread and wine and by the Power of the Holy Spirit the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ is made present once again and we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist; we eat and drink from the Rock which is Christ.

As the CCC teaches (1085)

In the liturgy of the Church, it is principally his own Paschal mystery that Christ signifies and makes present...When his hour comes he lives out the unique event of history which does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father “once for all. His Paschal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Paschal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past because...all that he did and suffered for all men - participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all...”

Why does Jesus make His sacrifice present in the Mass?

Jesus has given us

1. The way in which He wants us to worship, praise and thank the Father
2. The way he wants to fill us with His divine life

When the gifts are placed on the altar, our attitude ought to be one of: Father I give myself completely to You: all of my prayer, work, joy and suffering, and I unite it to the sacrifice of Your Son made present here. I offer it for my good and the good of the whole world.

In this way my whole life becomes a perfect gift to the Father since it has been swept up into the Worship of Jesus.

This is what Paul meant in Romans 12:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Jesus saved the world by His sacrifice. He allows us to participate in this saving work for our good and the good of the whole world.

The core difference between the Catholic faith and Protestant theology: Luther and Calvin taught there was no free will, consequently we cannot cooperate with God. The Catholic Church always taught we are free so that we can cooperate with God.

In the Mass Jesus is inviting us to unite our gifts to His to bring grace and good to the whole world.

Colossians 1:24, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body the Church...

Jesus is inviting us to take part in His saving work by offering ourselves to His sacrifice. Then everything we do takes on infinite meaning and good.

Everything I do or suffer, my prayer, work, joy and suffering is united to the saving work of Jesus. He gathers it to Himself and offers it to the Father. The Father then uses it to bring grace and good to the whole world.