

ON CHRIST MASS

The Christmas Season naturally brings thoughts of the realities of heaven and earth. The heavenly reality mixes with the earthly reality in an unprecedented way! God himself reaches down and touches the earth in an unparalleled manner: he becomes one of us, his human creation! What an immense act of condescension; what a fantastic act of exaltation!: God humbles himself to become a creature; the creature is exalted to the heavens because of this act of condescending love!

Love is the reason that the Incarnation happened at all! Love was God the Father's response to mankind's rude and entirely distrustful act of disobedience and rebellion! Fallen humankind could never reestablish the communion of love and trust that once existed between God and man, only a God-Man could do that: only the Son could do that: only Jesus could do that!

And so, after many centuries of preparation and anticipation; expectation and predilection, Jesus arrived on the human scene! On a cold and starry night – in a manger, in a stable – Christ the Lord was born! Heaven and earth united like never before! Choirs of angels sang; the shepherds adored and the tiny cry of the God-Man filled the night!

There are actually three comings of Christ! That Christmas night marked the first! The third will occur at the end of time – when he comes not as savior but as judge – as promised! The “second” actually occurs a limitless number of times – when we – who are baptized into his Body – invoke his presence and invite him into our lives! He comes primarily in the Sacraments – and primarily among them in the Eucharist! The holy Mass is the quintessential uniting of heaven on earth – while we are still *in via* – while we are still journeying on the path – while we are still making our way to our ultimate destination: fullness of life in the Kingdom!

When we celebrate Mass, we celebrate all three comings of Christ: we recall that he came among us, lived and died; he rose from the dead; and that he will come again as judge – but we also celebrate

the eternal heavenly nuptial banquet of the Lamb of God himself, who is Jesus Christ!

The experience of the Mass is the experience of heaven on earth – so Scott Hahn in his book: “The Lamb’s Supper – The Mass as Heaven on Earth” convincingly relates. This book is actually about the remarkable connection between the Mass and the Book of Revelation – which is all about the Second (Third) Coming of Christ – as judge! But it also means that Christmas, the Parousia and the end of time are all present all of the time.

If we only fully understood these things, what a difference it would make in our lives:

for one thing, our churches would be packed fully for daily as well as Sunday Mass – who would not want to experience heaven on earth as often as possible...

Sunday celebrations would be breathtaking in their solemnity, reverence, beauty and their audio-visual content...

living as true brothers and sisters when Mass is ended would be our joy and our peace, as well as our obligation and our duty...

the Church would at last be what it was always meant to be – a light shining in the darkness of the world – a beacon of hope for the weary and the distressed – a shelter and a home for the needy and the poor.

The problem is not that everything we need is not already in place. It has been in place for 2000 years:

Christmas has come and gone, the earthly life of Jesus has come and gone; Jesus, taking bread and wine and saying: “This is my body! This is the cup of my blood!” has come and gone! Jesus dying on the cross, emptying the last drop of his blood mixed with water on the ground, has come and gone; Jesus, Risen from the dead has come and gone; Jesus sending the Apostles has come and gone; Jesus ascending into heaven

has come and gone; Jesus and his Father sending the Holy Spirit to form the Church has come and gone: yet each and every one of these things remains because they are of God and they cannot pass away!

Yes, everything is here, everything is now, everything is ready for our use! And it is all summed up and represented in each and every Mass that is celebrated! Every Mass is Christ Mass!

There is no more significant use of time that anyone on earth can make than by fully engaging and participating in the holy Mass of the Catholic Church.

By it Christ keeps his promise “to remain with us until the end of time” – but not only that, he opens the gates of heaven and actually quite literally shows us what we will find when we get to the throne of God – when we get to the Feast – the Wedding Feast of the Lamb – that will last for ever!

There will be music and incense and vestments and prayers and a chalice and Jesus the Lamb of God will satisfy the justice required by God the Father for the disobedience of Adam, for ever! and so there will be JOY, there will be PEACE! there will be COMMUNION with GOD reestablished once and for all!

O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam, which brought for us so great a Redeemer!

May our celebration of Christ Mass this year, be unlike any other year – because we now understand it a little better!

Father William Dinga
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