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26 January 2020

III Sunday of Year A

Here we are again at Holy Mass. Given the dramatic and drastic statistics about Mass attendance among Catholics, we have to ask ourselves some questions. The statistics show a precipitous decline in Mass attendance over the last 50 years. In 1965, about 65% of American Catholics went to Mass every Sunday. By 2000, the number had dropped to 25%. Since then, the numbers have not improved.

What has happened? Why has there been such a catastrophic drop in Mass attendance by Catholics, since the so-called “renewal” of the II Vatican Council, which was supposed to make the Mass more understandable, more accessible and more lay-friendly? Today, I do not want to answer those questions. But I would like us to deepen and refresh our faith in and love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, so that we do not suffer the same loss of faith that has infected so many others.

I would like to use one of the most powerful prayers of the Roman Missal to help us understand the Mystery of the Holy Mass. It was the Prayer over the Gifts used in last Sunday's Mass for the II Sunday of the Year. Here is the prayer:

“Grant us. O Lord, we pray,
that we may participate worthily in these mysteries,
for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated
the work of our redemption is accomplished.”

Whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is accomplished.

What an impact these words should have on us! What they mean is that in the Holy Mass, the very same Sacrifice which Our Lord offered on the Cross is repeated, or renewed on the altar!

In other words, the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same! On Calvary, Our Lord offered a bloody Sacrifice to His Eternal Father. In the Mass, that same Sacrifice is offered, but now in an unbloody manner, a sacramental manner, a mystical manner. But it is one and the same Sacrifice!

This is the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which takes its teaching directly from the Council of Trent, which was combatting the errors of the Protestant revolt:

“The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross; the manner of offering is different.”

“And since in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ Who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner.”

Loss of understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice. Novus Ordo Mass: cause of loss of faith.