

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 4, 2026

We are here to grow our understanding of the Mass and increase our fervor - our love for Christ in the Eucharist. The more we learn, the more we love. A quick recap: First we answered why do you come to Mass - to give worship to God. And then, when it's offered at the Mass, the Holy Sacrifice the Mass makes present, Christ, one sacrifice offered on Calvary.

At each Mass, Jesus, the invisible priest, working through his visible, ordained priests, offers as a sacrificial victim, under the appearance of bread and wine, his body and blood. This is the same act of love of the Sacred Heart instituted at the Last Supper. Archbishop Sheen noted that the sacrifice on the Cross is not something that happened 2,000 years ago, it is something that's still happening today. And to better understand how this happens we will look at the Eucharist as a Sacrament.

Before looking at the Sacraments themselves, today's readings remind us why God gives us his gifts in the first place. God did not give us his grace merely to be possessed; God gives it so that we may bear fruit in our lives. In the first reading, we see the God in the vineyard. He prepared it – *‘God spaded it.’* He protects it – *‘God cleared it of stone.’* And he cared for it – *“God tilled the soil, built a wine press in it.”* However, the vineyard fails to bear good fruit, and in their pride, they produce wild grapes. Another translation states it has “stinking things.” They produce “stinking things.” This is because Israel did not appropriately respond to the gifts that they had received from the Lord.

Now, in today's Gospel, Jesus intentionally describes a vineyard using images from Isaiah's prophecy from the first reading today so that his listeners would immediately recognize that he is preaching about God's people and their response to the gifts he gave them. And instead of producing good fruits, and its good grapes of obedience, faithfulness and justice, the wicked tenants produce wild grapes, stinking things of bloodshed, oppression, aversion, and the like. As a result, when you hear Our Lord proclaiming judgment, *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruits"* importantly, they forgot that the vineyard belonged to the owner – the vineyard belongs to God - and they had an obligation to produce good fruit.

Brothers and sisters, this is a warning for us today. The work we do belongs to God. In week one, we learned that worship belongs to God. Week two, last week, we learned that the sacrifice belongs to Christ. And week three, that is this week, today, we learn that the Sacraments are about this given that his life may bear fruit within us. The real danger for us then is for you and me that in our pride, we receive God's gift, without allowing him to have to transform us into the image of Christ, to produce good fruit.

Now, as I was driving down to Andrew Kelly's ordination, I was listening to another talk by our Blessed Fulton Sheen. It might surprise you that I listen to him quite a bit. He remarked that man is the guardian of nature, a woman is the custodian of life. Physical life comes to us through our parents, but divine life comes to us through Christ and his Church. Through Baptism, divine life begins; through Confession, divine life is restored; and through the Eucharist, divine life is nurtured in us. Now, simply put, and Sacrament is an outward

sign instituted by Christ that conveys an inward grace, as it unites us to the divine life through the works of the Holy Spirit.

Now, there are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders. Of note, the Eucharist is not the first Sacrament one receives. It is the source and summit of all the Sacraments - all the others point to it, like spokes in a wheel pointing to the center. That's the Eucharist, the source summit of our Sacramental life. Each Sacrament gives us unique grace, we are going to briefly discuss three which are associated with the holy sacrifice of the Mass - Baptism, Penance, and Holy Communion.

Now, just as one prepares by washing your hands to respectfully sit down for a family meal, so, too we prepare to respectfully participate in Eucharistic meal. We first prepare by joining with our family through the Sacrament of Baptism where Jesus cleanses our souls, and we become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Sheen explains, "If I am to live the Christ life I must be born into it. That is the sacrament of Baptism." An outward sign of the Holy Spirit brings us into divine life.

After our Baptism, we continue to prepare for the Sacrament of Confession where Christ enters into our soul and continues to cleanse out our temple by purifying our sinful practices. As a reminder, this Sacrament is required for all grave sins before one can receive Holy Communion and grave sin is against the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church. Additionally, Sheen points out, that "if I am to live the Christ life, I must heal the wounds of my soul caused by sin. That is a sacrament of Penance,

also known as Confession or Reconciliation.” Confession is an outward sign in which the Holy Spirit repairs and restores union to divine life. He gives us graces to live Christ's virtuous life. Thus, in preparation for participation at the celebration of the Mass, we commit to going to Confession once a month and for every grave offense. Because it is healing Sacrament, it is not a punishment, but we can talk about that later when we talk about Sacrament of Confession. I will explain more there.

Now, recall that our Lord, Jesus the Paschal Lamb sacrificed once upon the Cross to God his Father. Now, the Paschal Lamb is being consumed in a particular manner, and importantly, in Eucharist, is to be consumed in a particular manner, in worthy reception, and that prescription involves the holy Mother Church. In addition, Bishop Sheen knows that “If I am to live the Christ life, I must nourish myself to stay in divine life, that is through the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.” Importantly, the Eucharist, as is all Sacraments, is an action of Christ. But unlike the other six sacraments, the Eucharist is not merely something our Lord does. It is Jesus himself given to us so that we may bear fruit for God.

Brothers and sisters Israel failed to produce good fruit in the first reading. The tenants failed to produce good fruit in the Gospel passage. And God gives us the Sacraments so that we may produce the fruit pleasing to him and the greatest of those is the Eucharist. The vineyard belongs to God. The gifts belong to God. The Sacraments belong to God. God gives us divine life through Baptism, strengthens it through Confession, and nurtures it through the Holy Eucharist so that we may bear fruit for his kingdom.

We have been warned about how we receive these gifts. We are to receive them well. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is essential worship of the Catholic faith, and the Eucharist is essential to the worship of the Mass. And we go to Mass, we go to receive God, to love him with all our heart, all our soul, our mind, and our all strength because we love him above all things.

Brothers and sisters, to know the gift, to know where we are to come to receive it well. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass contains the noble gift of Christ himself.

More to come next week. God loves you and so do I.