



Boston Catholic Journal

www.boston-catholic-journal.com
editor@boston-catholic-journal.com

THE MOST HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS:

A Primer for Clueless Catholics

Part VI

"I Die with Thee, O, Christ ...!"

When you assist at Mass (for that is what you are really doing, you are actively "assisting", not passively "attending", as we so often say), you have a very real part and a very real place in the drama that is about to unfold before you, a drama into which you will be called, not as a spectator, but as a participant.

A participant in what?

In the Passion, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Really.

The **only** difference between your being actually present at the foot of the Cross outside the walls of Jerusalem 2000 years ago, next to Mary, Saint John and the Magdalene – and your being present at the Altar before which you kneel at Church during Mass is this: *the mere closing of your eyes!*

It is the difference that Mary, that Saint John, that the Magdalene experienced when they, too, closed their eyes at the foot of the Cross upon which Jesus hung before them.

Did He cease to be on the Cross when they closed their eyes and could physically see Him no more? Did Jesus disappear? Go away? Cease to be? The skin covering their eyes, your eyes, my eyes, is the thinnest epidermal membrane (0.05 mm thin) in the body. But it was – it still is – sufficient to conceal Him from us.

In the case of Mary, John, and the Magdalene, it concealed him when their eyelids closed. In our case, it conceals Him when they are open! His presence was revealed to them when their eyes were opened. It is only revealed to us when our eyes are closed. In both instances it is not the case that He **was** there – and in the blink of an eye is no more – but that He **is** there!

At the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we are **present** at the death of Christ. We are present at His crucifixion! It is happening before us!

How many times have we said, "Oh, would that I were there! ... there to stand before Him ... to share in His Passion, to stand at His feet ...!"

You are!

But even more than *present* at this Sacrifice, ***we participate in it***, and we do so in a two-fold manner:

- through our sins for which and by which He was crucified –
- and ***we die with Him*** on this Cross of our own making!

Through our Baptism, we must remember, we were baptized not only into His life, but also into His *death!*

For this reason, Archbishop Fulton Sheen once so poignantly said that each of us, all of us, should, at the *Elevation* (the moment when the Priest lifts up of the Host that ***is*** Christ's Body, the Chalice that ***is*** Christ's Blood – when He holds up Jesus Christ Himself, in offering to the Father – , saying, "Through Him, With Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever" – that at that moment we should, from our hearts, from the depths of our being, utter in all truth: "***I die with Thee, O Christ, on Calvary***"

What we have learned today:

We are *active* participants in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, actually standing at the foot of the Cross.

Part 7: A Matter of Proximity

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