



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday, 22 November 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Continuing with the catecheses on the Mass, we can ask ourselves: what essentially is the Mass? The Mass is the *memorial of Christ's Passover*. It makes us participants in his victory over sin and death, and gives full meaning to our life.

For this reason, to understand the value of the Mass, we must first understand the biblical significance of "memorial". It is "not merely the recollection of past events but makes them in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them" (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1363). Jesus Christ, with his passion, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven brought the Passover to fulfillment. And the Mass is the memorial of *his* Passover, of *his* "exodus", which he carried out for us, so as to lead us out of slavery and introduce us to the promised land of eternal life. It is not merely a remembrance, no. It is more: it is making present what happened 20 centuries ago.

The Eucharist always leads us to the pinnacle of the salvific action of God: the Lord Jesus, making himself Bread broken for us, pours out upon us his mercy and his love, as he did on the Cross, thus renewing our hearts, our existence and our way of relating to him and to our brothers and sisters. The Second Vatican Council said: "As often as the sacrifice of the cross[,] in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 3).

Every celebration of the Eucharist is a ray of that never setting sun that is the Risen Jesus. Taking part in the Mass, particularly on Sunday, means entering the victory of the Risen One, being illuminated by his light, warmed by his compassion. Through the Eucharistic celebration the Holy Spirit makes us participants in the divine life that is able to transfigure our whole mortal being. In his passage from death to life, from time to eternity, the Lord Jesus also draws us with him to experience the Passover. In the Mass we celebrate Passover. We, during Mass, are with Jesus,

who died and is Risen, and he draws us forth to eternal life. In the Mass we unite with him. Rather, Christ lives in us and we live in him: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ”, Saint Paul states, “who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). This is what Paul thought.

Indeed, his Blood frees us from death and from the fear of death. It frees us not only from the dominion of physical death, but from the spiritual death which is evil, sin, which catches us each time we fall victim to our own sin or that of others. Thus our life becomes polluted; it loses beauty; it loses meaning; it withers.

Instead, Christ restores our life; Christ is the fullness of life, and when he faced death he destroyed it forever: “By rising he destroyed death and restored life” (cf. *Eucharistic Prayer* iv). Christ’s Passover is the definitive victory over death, because he transformed his death in the supreme act of love. He died out of love! And in the Eucharist, he wishes to communicate this, his paschal, victorious love, to us. If we receive him with faith, we too can truly love God and neighbour; we can love as he loved us, by giving our life.

If Christ’s love is within me, I can give myself fully to others, in the interior certainty that even if the other were to wound me I would not die; otherwise I should defend myself. The martyrs gave their own lives in this certainty of Christ’s victory over death. Only if we experience this power of Christ, the power of his love, are we truly free to give ourselves without fear. This is the Mass: to enter this passion, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus; when we go to Mass it is as if we were going to Calvary itself. But consider: whether at the moment of Mass we go to Calvary — let us ponder this with the imagination — and we know that that man there is Jesus. But will we allow ourselves to chat, to take photographs, to put on a little show? No! Because it is Jesus! We certainly pause in silence, in sorrow and also in the joy of being saved. As we enter the church to celebrate Mass, let us think about this: I am going to Calvary, where Jesus gave his life for me. In this way the spectacle disappears; the small talk disappears; the comments and these things that distance us from something so beautiful as the Mass, Jesus’ triumph.

I think that it is clearer now how the Passover is made present and active each time we celebrate the Mass, which is the meaning of *memorial*. Taking part in the Eucharist enables us to enter the Paschal Mystery of Christ, giving ourselves to pass over with him from death to life, meaning there, on Calvary. The Mass is experiencing Calvary; it is not a spectacle.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from England, the Netherlands, Poland, Australia, China, Indonesia, Singapore and the United States of America. I offer a particular greeting to the Marist and Marianist Brothers taking

part in a programme of spiritual renewal, and to the members of the priestly fraternity Companions of Christ. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly I offer a thought to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today we are celebrating the memorial of Saint Cecilia. Dear *young people*, by her example, may you grow in faith and in dedication to neighbours; dear *sick people*, in your suffering may you experience the support of Christ who is always beside those who are in difficulty; and may you, dear *newlyweds*, have the same gaze of pure love that Saint Cecilia had, so as to learn to love unconditionally.