

Father vastly exceeds all the benefits we have received from him. For this reason, the Mass is the ideal transmitter of our gratefulness.

**Atonement/ Penance** - any sin is an outrage against the infinite goodness of God. Only the self-sacrifice of his Son can provide us with the grace to transcend such outrage. The Mass is the prayer that provides satisfaction for our sin and releases grace to overcome it.

**Petition** - In the Mass our petitions are made more easily to the Father, through His Son in the Eucharist, **than in any other way**. The Mass and Eucharist are the perfect time for petitionary prayers.

### One Way to Pray the Mass

A very wonderful way to pray the Mass, to understand it as a genuine Prayer, and to reflect on the way it naturally includes the four different purposes of prayer, is to follow the example of St. Leonard of Port Maurice. He divided the Mass into four parts, each part representing one mode of praying to God.



1. **From the beginning of Mass To the Gospel** - use this period to make a prayer of **atonement and penance** consciously acknowledging our sinfulness against the Holiness of God, our nothingness against his infinite love.
2. **From the Gospel to the Consecration** - make your prayers of **petition** for your spiritual needs and selfless requests for others, e.g. for your family and friends, for the Church, for world peace, for those in most need, and for the souls in purgatory
3. **From the consecration to Holy Communion** - make this period one of **praise and adoration** to God for His own sake, making it meaningful by offering it through Our Lord Jesus
4. **From receiving Holy Communion to the end of Mass** - make sincere **thanksgiving** to God for the gift of himself, his Son and the Holy Spirit, for the graces we have been given, and for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints.

## Our Catholic Faith Prayer and Spirituality 2010-2011

25. The Prayer of the Mass  
- Our Greatest Prayer



1. Could there still be any merit in sacrificing an animal to God today?
2. What do you understand as the main purpose of the Mass?
3. How would you rank, in order of significance, the Mass as a prayer of adoration and praise, of atonement and penance, of thanksgiving and of petition?

## Sacrifice as Prayer

Remembering that prayer is really anything that helps keep people in contact with God, then sacrifice to God is also prayer.

Sacrifice is the offering of anything of value to God, for the reasons usually cited as the purposes of prayer: Praise, Thanksgiving, Petition or Penance.

However, in the Old Testament sacrifice came to be seen specifically as the death or destruction of something (initially plant (Cain, and Lv.2) or animal (Abel)) but eventually only animal, to show love of, thanks to, fear of, or to appease, God. Sometimes the notion of sacrificing something pure and valuable became corrupted to include child sacrifice. That such prayer was completely unacceptable to God can be seen in the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Gen.22), and the detailed stipulations laid down for different types of sacrifice, particularly in the Book of Leviticus.



## A New Sacrifice - Jesus' Perfect Prayer of the Cross

Jesus' death on the cross is a new type of sacrifice. This sacrifice is the **most pleasing** to God the Father, because it is the **self-sacrifice** of His Son for humanity out of Jesus' pure love for us. It is a sacrifice that **unifies** all the different types of O.T. sacrifices into a **single** action.

Primarily, it is the perfect sacrifice of **penance** that tells us we can now be united with God; it is the **atonement sacrifice par excellence**.

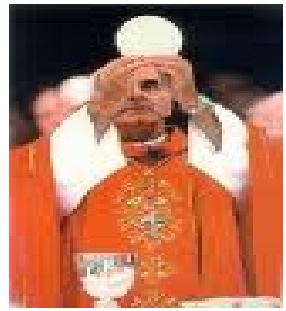
It is also a **thanksgiving** sacrifice made by Jesus, on our behalf, for that great gift of forgiveness and love that the Father has shown us.

It is also a sacrifice of **love and praise** for the Father who is worthy of love for His own sake.

Finally, it is a sacrifice of **petition**, that we will always be given the grace to remain free of sin and in the Father's favour.

## The Mass as Sacrifice

The Mass is the mystery of our Faith whereby Jesus becomes truly **present** on the altar, under the appearances of bread and wine, and his **sacrificial death** is mystically re-presented by the separation and destruction of the species.



## Why Does the Sacrifice of Jesus have to be Re-Presented?

Jesus' death as a single event in history is utterly sufficient for our salvation. The sacrifice of the Mass does not imply any deficiency in what Jesus has achieved for us. It must be made clear that the Mass and Calvary are **the same** except for the **manner** of offering:

The **Victim** is the same - on the Cross Jesus was **really** killed  
- In the Mass Jesus is **mystically** killed

The **Priest** is the same - Jesus acted **directly** as priest on the cross  
- In the Mass Jesus is present **through** the priest

The **Value** is the same - The death of Jesus has **infinite** value  
- In the Mass, that **infinite value is accessed**

However, the Mass is the most powerful way we have of **applying the graces** won for us by Jesus' death. It is not sufficient for Jesus to have gained for us infinite grace. We remain open to sin, need forgiveness for ongoing sin, and constantly need grace to persevere on our journey. The Mass/Eucharist is the prime means of **distributing** grace.

## The Mass as Our Greatest Prayer

Because the Mass re-presents Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, it is also a prayer of Praise, Thanksgiving, Atonement/Penance and Petition.

**Praise to God the Father** - Each Mass is of infinite value in expressing our love and praise of God the Father because the person doing the praising and loving on our behalf is His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving to the Father** - the Mass is a Eucharistic (thanksgiving) sacrifice because the value of Jesus' sacrifice to his