

“Perpetual Sacrifice, have mercy on us.”

Litany of the Blessed Sacrament by St Peter Julian Eymard

The Litany of the Blessed Sacrament is filled with wonderful titles, each encapsulating the beauty and truth of Our Lord’s presence in the Blessed Sacrament. ‘Bond of Love,’ ‘Refreshment of holy souls,’ ‘Food and guest,’ ‘O Mystery of Faith,’ to name but a few. Today, and over the next few days, we’ll start to unpack some of these titles and open up some of the wonders that are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. We begin with, ‘Perpetual Sacrifice.’

On the Cross, Our Lord offered one sacrifice for all time. In this sacrifice, He laid down His life, and by the Blood that He shed he bought back from God the Father all the graces and blessings which the Father had always willed that we should have but which we have forfeited back into the Father’s keeping as a result of our sins.

Nothing of value can be bought except at great cost. The thing of value that Christ was buying back for us is our place in heaven. The great cost for that thing of value was the sacrifice of His life on the Cross. The price that Christ paid for us was the price of His Precious Blood poured out for us on Calvary.

But if we are to share in the beauty of heaven, we must also participate in the sacrifice of Calvary. None of us can get to heaven unless we are willing to offer the sacrifice of our own lives during our time on earth. There simply is no other way. But in addition to offering up prayer, and penance, and sacrifice in this life, we can also participate in Christ’s sacrifice sacramentally.

The Mass – first offered up at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday – is a true sacrifice. Each time the priest says Mass, he is offering up the sacrifice of Calvary in

sacramental form. In this way, we can be made present at the events of Calvary and participate in Christ's death and resurrection. It is astonishing that God has found a way for us to be present at Christ's death two thousand years ago, but that's exactly what is happening at each and every Mass. And by being present at Mass, and therefore at the foot of the Cross, we can share in the merits – the graces – that flow from Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. That's why watching a live-stream Mass is not the same as being at Mass, and does not fulfil our Sunday obligation: we are not truly present at the action of the Mass and therefore cannot draw down upon ourselves the graces that flow from the Mass.

Now here's the thing. With God, there is no past or future. There is only the present. God dwells in an eternal present. This means that, properly speaking, God's actions are not fixed in a single moment in time but are perpetual. When God performs a single action – like Feeding the Five Thousand or giving sight to a blind person – it is not so much that the action is fixed in a moment in time but that the action is lifted up to participate in God's eternity. In other words, the Five Thousand are indeed being fed real bread in real time but they are also being lifted up, as it were, to participate in the everlasting nourishment of eternity. When a blind man is given his sight, he does indeed have his sight restored in this life but he is also being lifted up, as it were, to participate in the light of God's eternity. Every action of God on earth is a participation for us in God's eternal present in heaven.

With this in mind, we can see how Christ's sacrifice on Calvary did indeed take place as a real, historical event two thousand years ago. But that sacrifice is also taking place in God's eternity: Christ gives Himself to the Father once and for all, but that act of giving lasts for all eternity.

Anyone who participates in Christ's act of sacrifice is drawn into His eternal gift of Himself to God the Father. And this is where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Blessed Sacrament, come in. Each time we go to Mass, and each time we receive Holy

Communion, we are participating in Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, and are therefore being drawn up into Christ's eternal gift of Himself to God the Father. Every time we go to Mass or receive Holy Communion, Christ is giving us to the Father as a gift.

Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was a once-for-all sacrifice, but that once-for-all offering lasts for all eternity: it is perpetual.

In the same way, the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament were instituted by Christ at the Last Supper precisely so that, when we share in the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament, we, too, get drawn up into this perpetual and eternal offering, even though we were not physically present at the foot of the Cross.

The Sacred Host in the tabernacle really is, then, the living presence of Christ Himself who is offering His living and perpetual sacrifice to the Father on our behalf.

And so we can pray, Perpetual sacrifice, have mercy on us.