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THE RECUPERATION OF SACRIFICE

A b s t r a c t. We could better understand the sacrifice of the mass if we could recuperate the word “sacrifice.” The common, secular understanding of sacrifice speaks in terms of loss, sadness, and giving something up, whereas the biblical, theological understanding speaks in terms of gift, joy, and giving to God. This article therefore considers sacrifice in the three environments in which it occurs: innocence, sin, and Christ. The first is the cosmic liturgy of *homo adorans*, done in the state of original justice. The second recognizes a corrupted form of sacrifice, waiting redemption. The third is the sacrifice of the cross wherein grace perfects nature, and sacrifice is recuperated. The sacrificial Christ – priest and victim – gives himself to members of his mystical body to train them in true sacrifice.

Keywords: Sacrifice; Mass; liturgy; priest; victim.

One of the tasks of the academy is to make a person conscious of the meanings that surround a word, because every word is surrounded by more than one meaning. I often attempt this with students in class by playing what I call “the Wittgenstein game.” Wittgenstein thought that the meaning of a word is conditioned by the language game in which it plays, and therefore he turned to instances of a word’s use rather than turning only to the dictionary. I ask students to use the word “sacrifice” in some sentences and then we go back over them to see what the word means in these various cases. It is like the word is a boxcar in a train of thought, and we want to see what freight it is carrying. I receive sentences like the following: “Your mother and I have sacrificed so much for you.” “I sacrificed an hour of sleep to get my reading done.” “I sacrificed my queen to put you in checkmate.” “We

will have to make some sacrifices to stay on budget.” And, “the soldier sacrificed himself for his country.” The reader can join in and play along. In fact, an advantage of the Wittgenstein game is that it can be played anywhere – indeed, should be played everywhere, because we need to understand the context when we speak and listen.

Next I ask students to examine the word “sacrifice” in the examples they have given me. What different word could be substituted? What place is that word holding, and what other word could communicate the same meaning? We look at the sentences one by one and I receive the following: “giving up; losing; offering; abstaining; exchange one thing to gain another; for the greater good; pay the price; deny oneself; loss of what matters to me; accomplishing a greater good; giving oneself up,” and so forth. I would summarize them as saying that sacrifice might be a worthy act because it brings about a greater good, but it does so by a painful loss. If there were neither pain nor gain, would we call it a sacrifice? We neither wake up with a bright smile wondering what we might sacrifice today, nor do we call it a sacrifice if we lose without profiting. Our classroom experience seems to prove a point made by a mid-20th century scholar named Royden Yerkes who examined Hebrew, Greek, and Roman ideas of sacrifice, and distinguished a modern understanding of sacrifice from an ancient one.

Yerkes describes the prevailing modern understanding as treating sacrifice as something that may be material or immaterial; which must be valuable to the person making the sacrifice; which is constituted by renouncing or giving up something; in which the sacrificer deprives himself of the use of something; which is made *by* somebody, *of* something, and *for* something, but never *to* anybody; which means the emphasis is upon the sacrificed thing’s destruction; which means sacrifice denotes sadness and misfortune; which means the cost of the sacrifice should be compared with the value obtained because we desire to obtain as much as possible for as little as possible.¹ In pointed contrast, however, he describes the ancient understanding of sacrifice by the following characteristics:

1. The word had no secular significance whatever, but strictly described religious rites and things [...]
2. The word never connoted reluctance or deprivation or renunciation or sadness or inevitability grimly accepted. Sacrifices were occasions of greatest

¹ Royden Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), summary of points made on pages 3-4.

joy and festivity and thanksgiving, and were gladly performed as expressions of the attitude of men to their gods.

3. Sacrifices were always as large as possible; the larger they could be made, the greater would be the accompanying joy and festivity.

4. They were offered *by men to their gods*; a sacrifice not offered to some person was inconceivable. The stress was upon the *giving* and not upon *giving up*.

5. While they were offered to procure boons from the gods, they were frequently offered after the boon had been received, and as expressions of thanksgiving.

6. The death of the animal, while a necessary fact preliminary to the sacrifice ... was not a factor of the sacrifice ... No significance was ever attached to the fact that the animal had died. We never hear of death *qua* death effecting anything.²

It seems clear, Yerkes concludes, that the word sacrifice has undergone a nearly complete transformation of meaning.

If we become attentive to that transformation of meaning, what shall we make of the phrase “sacrifice of the mass”? It sounds quite different under the modern rubrics than the ancient ones. In the former case, the mass is a shrewd calculation on our part, offering God as little as possible in the hope that it will be enough to make him leave us alone. In the latter case, the mass can be seen as an act of religion done without reluctance, an act of joy, festivity, and thanksgiving. We do well to ask ourselves with which attitude people approach the altar, but that is not where I want to go right now.

I would like to go even further back than Yerkes did in my desire to notice the contexts in which sacrifice can be understood. A historian can investigate the world of antiquity by its literature and practices, but a theologian can go even further back than that, to the Garden of Eden. This, of course, is based upon Scripture’s revealed anthropology, which sees man and woman as cosmic priests whose vocation includes sacrifice. Alexander Schmemmann describes this liturgical anthropology well when he describes man and woman as *homo adorans*.

All rational, spiritual and other qualities of man, distinguishing him from other creatures, have their focus and ultimate fulfillment in this capacity to bless God, to know, so to speak, the meaning of the thirst and hunger that constitutes his life. “*Homo sapiens*,” “*homo faber*” ... yes, but, first of all, “*homo adorans*.” The first, the basic

² Yerkes, *Sacrifice*, 4-5.

definition of man is that he is *the priest*. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God – and by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him. The world was created as the “matter,” the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament.³

God’s creation is composed as a cosmic liturgy, with man and woman serving as cosmic priests to offer up the great cosmic eucharist. All creatures glorify God, but they are not conscious, as is *homo adorans*. Creation glorifies God, but man and woman glorify him with reason, reasonably, with words, with a *logike latreia* (Romans 12:1). The Church fathers called human beings microcosms, hybrids, and a new universe because they had both body and spirit by which they could know things the animals could not, and experience things the angels could not. “In some way a new universe was born, small and great at one and the same time. God set this hybrid worshiper on earth to contemplate the visible world, and to be initiated into the invisible; to reign over earth’s creatures, and to obey orders from on high.”⁴

The theological analysis of sacrifice discovers three environments in which it occurs: innocence, sin, and Christ. In the first – gratuitously! – God’s creation is a cosmic liturgy, man and woman are cosmic priest, and sacrifice is the primary act of priesthood. In the second – alas! – the Fall has displaced us from Paradise, deprived our nature of original justice, and the damage done to our priesthood caused damage to the sacrifice we make, or fail to make, or make idolatrously. In the third – alleluia! – grace perfects nature, Christ’s sacrifice perfects human sacrifice, and our sacrifice meets upon his cross. This is salvation history, the economy of salvation, as Aidan Kavanagh summarizes. “Genesis says that we began in a swamp teeming with life, but that something went vastly wrong one evening at dinner. Apocalypse says that the difficulty was finally resolved into something called the Banquet of the Lamb. Hebrews tells us how the resolution was accomplished, not in an orchard set in pleasant countryside but in a butcher shop located in the city’s center.”⁵ Let us look at these three environments in turn.

³ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 15.

⁴ Cited in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New York City Press, 1996), 77.

⁵ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Press, 1984), 34.

1. SACRIFICE IN A STATE OF ORIGINAL JUSTICE

Human beings are created as cosmic priests, and Schmemmann thinks this is ordinary, normal, natural.

To be *priest* is from a profound point of view the most natural thing in the world. Man was created priest of the world, the one who offers the world to God in a sacrifice of love and praise and who, through this eternal eucharist, bestows the divine love upon the world. Priesthood, in this sense, is the very essence of manhood, man's creative relation to the "womanhood" of the created world. And Christ is the one true Priest because he is the one true and perfect man. He is the new Adam, the restoration of that which Adam failed to be. Adam failed to be the priest of the world, and because of this failure the world ceased to be the sacrament of the divine love and presence, and became "nature."⁶

This theological fact accounts for the makeup of our human nature, our teleological end, our dominion over material things, our moral and social obligations, and our religious instincts.

Schmemmann thinks the thousands of books written on sacrifice, which give varied explanations, miss the most basic and simple explanation, namely that "wherever and whenever man turns to God, he necessarily senses the need to offer him the most precious things that he has, what is most vital for his life, as a gift and sacrifice."⁷ It is a natural instinct, a human instinct, a religious instinct inscribed uniquely in the beings created in the image of God. They want a way home. Their hearts are restless for their creator. The phrase is meant to remind us of Augustine's famous quote because it is his definition of sacrifice that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers also as its own: "Sacrifice is 'every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness.'"⁸ In the Garden of Eden these two cosmic priests served as the tongue of mute creation, offering up with themselves all the world over which they had been given dominion. If we had a theological eyes with which to see, we would find this truth in the substratum of every sacrifice, even those that modernity disparages. "From the time of Cain and Abel, the blood of sacrifices has daily covered the earth and the smoke of burnt offerings has unceasingly risen to heaven. Our 'refined' sensi-

⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 92-93.

⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 101.

⁸ *Catechism*, no. 2099, quoting St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 10.

bilities are horrified by these blood sacrifices, by these ‘primitive’ religions. In our horror, however, do we not forget and lose something very basic, very primary, without which in essence there is no religion? For in its ultimate depths religion is nothing other than *thirst for God*.”⁹

Sacrifice done in original justice (soon to be contrasted with sacrifice done in original sin) arises from the awareness that outside of God there is only darkness and meaninglessness, that God is the goal and the joy of all existence, that we should love him with all our heart, and wherever is felt “this yearning for genuine life, there necessarily is sacrifice. In the sacrifice man gives himself and his own over to his God, because, knowing God, he cannot but love him, and loving him, he cannot but strive toward him and toward unity with him.”¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas treats worship within the four natural virtues in the *Summa Theologica*, specifically the virtue of justice, because justice consists of giving another being his due. “Since then it belongs to religion to pay due honor to someone, namely, to God, it is evident that religion is a virtue.”¹¹ Wherever consciences are well formed, we will not be surprised to find altars and priesthoods, sacrifices and religion. Religion is a thirst for God, and this thirst animates sacrifice.

2. SACRIFICE IN A STATE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Deplorably, the Fall was the forfeiture of our liturgical career, and it resulted in two aberrations. First, man and woman reversed their flow of life. The two states, original and fallen, represent a choice between giving or taking, between dependence or independence, between grateful or selfish, between living as priest or consumer. Schmemmann writes, “I’ve always understood the fall (or what is called ‘Original Sin’) as the loss of man’s desire to be a priest; or perhaps you might say the desire he has not to be a priest but a consumer.”¹² When man and woman lost their desire to be priest, they lost their way, and their descendants lost their spiritual eyesight. The world looks different

⁹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 102.

¹⁰ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 102.

¹¹ St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* II.II Q81, a2.

¹² Alexander Schmemmann, „Sacrifice and Worship,” in *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 132.

to us now. We are blind to the twin potentiality of matter for sacrament and sacrifice, and now take the world as something to be consumed.

The first consumer was Adam himself. He chose not to be priest but to approach the world as consumer: to “eat” of it, to use and to dominate it for himself, to benefit from it but not to offer, not to sacrifice, not to have it for God and in God. And the most tragical fruit of that original sin is that it made religion itself into a “consumer good” meant to satisfy our “religious needs,” to serve as a security blanket or therapy, to supply us with cheap self-righteousness and equally cheap self-centered and self-serving “spiritualities”...¹³

The second aberration is a suffering inflicted upon the world. We said that creation glorifies God without the consciousness that was given only to human creatures raised from the dust, but Ephrem the Syrian imagines what the creatures would say if they were able to speak. Man and woman’s misguided worship would pain the creature.

The sun bellowed out in silence to the Lord against his worshippers.
It was a suffering for him, the servant, that instead of his Lord he was worshipped.
Behold the creation is joyful that the Creator is worshipped ...
Since fools honored the sun, they diminished him in his honor.
Now that they know he is a servant, by his course he worships his Lord.
All the servants are glad to be counted servants.
Blessed is he who set the natures in order!
We have done perverse things that we should be servants to servants.¹⁴

Our failure to make sacrifice to the true God is a perversion that contorts the sacrifices we continue to do. Augustine said that sacrifice is every action done so as to cling to God, and clinging to God is exactly what Adam and Eve forsook. “Where are you?” asked God. “I heard you in the garden, but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” Only a corrupt form of sacrifice can come forth from such a hiding place. The sacrifice made in innocence was animated by an attraction toward God, a thirst for God, but the sacrifice made in sin has the motive of staying out of God’s reach, staying safe from God. The very purpose of sacrifice has been inverted. Sacred and profane have been jumbled and confused, as Louis Bouyer observes. “[Modern man] assumes that

¹³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 96.

¹⁴ Ephrem, “Hymns on the Nativity”, in *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, Classics of Western Spirituality, 1989), 180-81.

reality was from the first profane and in order to have something sacred it was necessary to take hold of that which was profane and consecrate it. The truth, however, is the very opposite to this rather smug opinion. Not only was the sacred never made out of the profane, but, in fact, it is the profane that has come into being through a desecration of the sacred.”¹⁵ The world changes the moment man becomes a consumer instead of a sacrificer.

[Man] circumscribes a limited area in this reality as his own to the exclusion of God. At this moment the profane in contrast to the sacred makes its appearance. The more firmly a man establishes himself in the world as his own home, the more this area of the profane is extended. Moreover, the farther he extends the boundaries of his own piece of ground, the less interest he takes in the rest. A time finally comes when the profane practically seems to coincide with the real. The sacred is no more than a local survival. The rites then easily appear to man as the making of something sacred.¹⁶

3. SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS

The sacrifices human beings have performed from their hiding places have proven impotent to perform the original duty of priesthood and true purpose of sacrifice.

All these sacrifices ... were powerless to destroy sin and restore the fullness of unity with God that man had forfeited ... They were powerless because, though filled with thirst for God and for unity with him, they themselves remained under the law of sin. And the sin is not guilt, which can be smoothed over and atone for – albeit at a very high price. Sin is above all the rupture from God of life itself ... This fallen life, wholly subordinate to the law of sin, does not, and cannot, have the power to heal and revive itself, to fill itself with life again, to make itself sanctified once more ... One who is buried alive cannot dig himself up, a dead man cannot raise himself¹⁷.

What Adam was created to do, and failed to do, a New Adam would have to do, and finally did. The act of sacrifice could only be recuperated and returned to Adam's children when a perfect victim would be offered by a perfect priest. Oblation must be wed to propitiation, and then communicated to

¹⁵ Louis Bouyer, *Rite and Man* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1963), 80.

¹⁶ Bouyer, *Rite and Man*, 80-81.

¹⁷ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 103.

us. "And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence."¹⁸

John of Avila explains that the sacrifice frightens sinners. "If we had not added evil over the good that we have from God, there would have been nothing within us that the Lord would have looked at with angry eyes, but only with eyes of love. For any cause [God] naturally loves its effect [mankind] ... God has not placed his eyes of wrath principally on his handiwork, which we are, but against the sins that we have committed. God wishes to destroy these as long as we do not impede him."¹⁹ God's look and man's look must coincide. The first look of God's eyes is against the sin we committed; what remedy is there so that God will not look at my sins to punish me? "Augustine responds with brevity and truth: 'You look at them.' He means: 'Recognize them and do penance and God will not look at them. But if you put them behind your back, God has to put them before his face.'"²⁰ These are the looks now being exchanged at the foot of the cross. The thief beside Jesus did not merit to be pardoned by his weeping, but pardon came from Christ's look at him, and his return look at Christ. Like him, we are all directed to Christ's sacrifice. What did Christ, the new Abel, have to offer that was worthy? "Certainly not brute animals, much less sinful man, for these are more likely to provoke God's anger than to attain mercy ... Since no one and nothing was without sin, this High Priest had nothing to offer for the sins of the world except himself, thus making the priest a victim."²¹ Now the Shepherd looks at his sheep as he carries them, and they look at him.

This is what we see when we look at the sacrifice on the cross, where an innocent priest offers himself as a stainless victim. Then that perfect oblation reaches across time from the cross to our altar upon the flood of liturgy that issues from Christ's pierced side. Our sacrifice recuperates when the redemption won in the Paschal mystery is extended by a liturgy arching from his bloody

¹⁸ Council of Trent, Session 22, chapter 2, <http://www.thecounciloftrent.com/ch22.htm>

¹⁹ John of Avila, *Audi, Filia – Listen, O Daughter* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 248.

²⁰ John of Avila, 249.

²¹ John of Avila, 250-51.

cross to our unbloody altar. Kavanagh used to say that liturgy is doing the world the way the world was meant to be done. I will add that liturgy is doing the world sacrificially when we have become the priests we were meant to be. The “sacrifice of the mass” is more than personal piety (although it requires that), it is the repair by the Second Adam of a state that had been disturbed by the First Adam (justification restores original justice). Schmemmann writes,

We know that we have lost this eucharistic life, and finally we know that in Christ, the new Adam, the perfect man, this eucharistic life was restored to man. For He Himself was the perfect Eucharist ... “To take in our hands the whole world as if it were an apple!” said a Russian poet. It is our Eucharist. It is the movement that Adam failed to perform, and that in Christ has become the very life of man: a movement of adoration and praise in which all joy and suffering, all beauty and all frustration, all hunger and all satisfaction are referred to their ultimate end and become finally meaningful. Yes, to be sure, it is a sacrifice: but sacrifice is the most natural act of man, the very essence of his life. Man is a sacrificial being, because he finds his life in love, and love is sacrificial.²²

Eucharist is restored to us, sacrifice is returned to us, and we can fulfill our human vocation as cosmic priests once again – if, but only if, our liturgical life and sacrificial actions are united to Christ.

4. CONCLUSION:

THE LITURGICAL COMMUNICATION OF SACRIFICIAL LIFE

This is why liturgical theology affirms a tri-fold connection from cross to altar to heart. The bloody sacrifice is one with the unbloody sacrifice, and it becomes one with our spiritual sacrifice. If we want to know what is happening on the altar, we must know what happened on the cross.

We therefore confess that the Sacrifice of the Mass is and ought to be considered one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, for the victim is one and the same, namely, Christ our Lord, who offered Himself, once only, a bloody Sacrifice on the altar of the cross. The bloody and unbloody victim are not two, but one victim only, whose Sacrifice is daily renewed in the Eucharist, in obedience to the command of our Lord: Do this for a commemoration of me.²³

²² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 34-35.

²³ *The Roman Catechism*, https://www.catholicsociety.com/documents/Catechism_of_the_Council%20of_Trent.pdf

And if we want to know what the cross accomplished, we must see its effect, which is our divinization. "The pasch is a sacrifice with the consecration of the person that flows from it; it is the sacrifice of the God-man in death on the cross, and his resurrection to glory: it is the Church's sacrifice in communion with and by the power of the crucified God-man, and the wonderful joining to God, the divinization which is its effect."²⁴ Across this liturgical-mystical bridge the past is made present by its effects (anamnesis). Across this same bridge our personal, spiritual sacrifice is connected to the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, which is connected to the bloody sacrifice of the cross.

Our sacrifice of the mass is united to Christ's personal sacrifice. His sacrifice beats as the heart of the sacrifice of the Mystical Body. Now is united Christ's sacrifice and ours, Christ's worship and ours, Christ's glorification of the Father and what we have assembled to do at mass. Liturgy is not another one of the religions of the old Adam that has littered the history of humankind, it is the religion of the incarnate Christ being perpetuated in his Bride. The Eucharist makes the Church because "the liturgy, 'through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,' most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church"²⁵ The Eucharist makes Christians because their participation in the Paschal mystery

extends beyond the moment when the sacraments happen ... The Church celebrates Christ's sacrifice even outside her liturgical action; she celebrates it in her faithful who die to themselves through obedience, with Christ on the Cross; in those who struggle to gain heavenly love, who raise themselves out of this world towards purity and poverty of heart, with Christ who went to the Father, in all the faithful who work and suffer, who love God and neighbor, who give themselves for the salvation of others. In all of them the church is the redeeming sacrifice, the Mass celebrated in spirit and in truth.²⁶

The mystical act and the historical act, the invisible action and the visible action, are united by the hypostatic union. Now Christ continues to do in the soul of every one of his brothers and sisters what he did during the brief

²⁴ Odo Casel, *Mystery of Christian Worship* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962), 13.

²⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, paragraph 2.

²⁶ F.X. Durrwell, *In the Redeeming Christ: Toward a Theology of Spirituality* (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 62-63.

time he was on the face of our earth. “Christ does not separate himself from his mystical body. Before ascending into heaven, he bequeaths his riches and mission to his Church. Christ, in uniting himself to the Church, gives her his power of adoring and praising the Father; this is the liturgy. It is the praise of the Church united to Jesus, supported by Jesus; or rather it is the praise of Christ, the incarnate Word, passing through the lips of the Church.”²⁷

Not only does Christ give his Bride his power of adoring the Father, he also gives his Bride the power of his charity. His love was sacrificial by being directed both upward toward the Father and outward toward the poor and suffering. His life was lived sacrificially toward both heaven and earth. And as his entire sacrificial life did the Father’s will by loving the poor around him, so our recuperated sacrificial life should love the poor around us. That is why John Chrysostom speaks of charity as a sacrificial opportunity!

Do not protest! This stone altar is august because of the Victim that rests upon it; but the altar of almsgiving is more so because it is made of this very Victim. The former is august because, though made of stone, it is sanctified by contact with the body of Christ; the latter, because it is the body of Christ ... This altar you can see everywhere, in the streets and in the market place, and at any hour you may offer sacrifice thereon; for it too is a place of sacrifice.²⁸

The Catechism says, simply, “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*.”²⁹ What happened on the cross extends beyond Golgotha and beyond the first century; similarly, what happens at the altar extends beyond the sacramental liturgy into the spiritual, mystical, and charitable liturgy of our daily life. And thus is Paradise restored and the New Jerusalem anticipated.

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²⁷ Columba Marmion, *Christ, the Ideal of the Monk* (St. Louis: Herder, 1922), 297.

²⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians*, quoted in Mersch, *The Whole Christ*, 335.

²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1367.

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PRZYWRÓCENIE ZNACZENIA OFIARY

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Ofiarniczy wymiar Mszy świętej mógłby być lepiej zrozumiany, jeśli na nowo przywrócilibyśmy pojęcie „ofiary”. Powszechne, świeckie rozumienie ofiary ujmując ją w kategoriach straty, smutku i rezygnacji z czegoś, podczas gdy biblijne, teologiczne rozumienie widziane jest w kategoriach daru, radości i dawania Bogu. Dlatego w artykule poddano analizie ofiarę w trzech kontekstach, w których się ona dokonuje: niewinności, grzechu i Osoby Chrystusa. Pierwszy z nich to kosmiczna liturgia homo adorans, sprawowana w stanie pierwotnej sprawiedliwości. Drugi to skażona po grzechu forma ofiary oczekującej na odkupienie. Trzecia to ofiara krzyża, w której łaska udoskonala naturę, a pierwotne znaczenie ofiary zostaje przywrócone. Ofiarny Chrystus – kapłan i ofiara – oddaje się członkom swojego mistycznego ciała, aby formować ich do prawdziwej ofiary.

Słowa kluczowe: ofiara; Msza święta; liturgia; kapłan.