

## Entering Into the Mystery of the Mass

### **Ancient roots: from St. Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, written in 155 A.D.**

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *ge'noito* [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

And this food is called among us *Eucharistia* [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. (*excerpts from Chapters 65-67 of St. Justin Martyr's First Apology*)

## **Passages from the Book of Revelation—echoes of the liturgy of heaven**

“After this I had another vision: above me there was an open door to heaven. A throne was standing there in heaven, and on the throne was seated One whose appearance had a gemlike sparkle.” (4:1-2)

“Then, between the throne with the four living creatures and the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, a Lamb that had been slain.” (5:6)

“At the very center, around the throne itself, stood four living creatures covered with eyes front and back. The first creature resembled a lion, the second an ox; the third had the face of a man, while the fourth looked like an eagle in flight....Day and night, without pause, they sing: ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, He who was, and who is, and who is to come!’” (4:6, 8)

“Surrounding this throne were twenty-four other thrones upon which were seated twenty-four elders; they were clothed in white garments and had crowns of gold on their heads.” (4: 4)

“I heard the number of those who were so marked—one hundred and forty-four thousand from every tribe of Israel.” (7:4)

“After this I saw a huge crowd which no one could count from every nation and race, people and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in long white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, ‘Salvation is from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb!’ All the angels who were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures fell down before the throne to worship God. They said: ‘Amen! Praise and glory, wisdom and honor, power and might, to our God forever and ever. Amen!’” (7: 9-12)

“I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: ‘This is God’s dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them.’” (21: 1-3)

“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ Let him who hears answer, ‘Come!’ Let him who is thirsty come forward: let all who desire it accept the gift of life-giving water.” (22:17)