

XXIV. THE MASS

¹ We are unjustly accused of having abolished the Mass.

² Without boasting, it is manifest that **the Mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents.**

Moreover, the people are instructed often and with great diligence concerning the holy sacrament,

why it was instituted,

and how it is to be used (namely, as a comfort for terrified consciences)

in order that the people may be drawn to the Communion and Mass.

The people are also given **instruction about other false teachings** concerning the sacrament.

² Meanwhile **no conspicuous changes** have been made in the public ceremonies of the Mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung in addition to the Latin responses for the instruction and exercise of the people.

³ After all, **the chief purpose of all ceremonies** is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ.

¹⁰ Before our time, however, the Mass came to be misused in many ways, as is well known, by **turning it into a sort of fair**, by buying and selling it, and by observing it in almost all churches for a monetary consideration. Such abuses were often condemned by learned and devout men even before our time. ¹² Then when our preachers preached about these things and the priests were reminded of the terrible responsibility which should properly concern every Christian (namely, that whoever uses the sacrament unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of Christ), ¹³ **such mercenary Masses and private Masses, which had hitherto been held under compulsion for the sake of revenues and stipends, were discontinued in our churches.**

²¹ At the same time **the abominable error** was condemned according to which **it was taught that our Lord Christ has by his death made satisfaction only for original sin, and had instituted the Mass as a sacrifice for other sins.**

²² This transformed the Mass into **a sacrifice for the living and the dead, a sacrifice by means of which sin was taken away and God was reconciled.** ²³ Thereupon followed a debate as to whether one Mass held for many people merited as much as a special Mass held for an individual. Out of this grew countless multiplication of Masses, by the performance of which men expected to get everything they needed from God. **Meanwhile faith in Christ and true service of God were forgotten.**

²⁴ Demanded without doubt by the necessity of such circumstances, instruction was given so that our people might know **how the sacrament is to be used rightly.**

²⁶ They were taught, **first of all**, that **the Scriptures show in many places that there is no sacrifice for original sin, or for any other sin, except the one death of Christ.** ²⁷ For it is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews that **Christ offered himself once and by this offering made satisfaction for all sin.** ²⁵ It is an unprecedented novelty in church doctrine that Christ's death should have made satisfaction only for original sin and not for other sins as well. Accordingly it is to be hoped that everyone will understand that this error is not unjustly condemned.

²⁸ In the **second place**, St. Paul taught that **we obtain grace before God through faith and not through works.** ²⁹ Manifestly contrary to this teaching is the **misuse of the Mass by those who think that grace is obtained through the performance of this work**, for it is well known that the Mass is used to remove sin and obtain grace and all sorts of benefits from God, not only for the priest himself but also for the whole world and for others, both living and dead.

³⁰ In the **third place**, the holy sacrament was **not instituted to make provision for a sacrifice for sin** — for the sacrifice has already taken place — but **to awaken our faith and comfort our consciences** when we perceive that **through the sacrament grace and forgiveness of sin are promised us by Christ.** **Accordingly the sacrament requires faith, and without faith it is used in vain.**

³⁴ Inasmuch, then, as the Mass is

not a sacrifice to remove the sins of others, whether living or dead,

but **should be a Communion in which the priest and others receive the sacrament for themselves,**

it is observed among us in the following manner:

On holy days, and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is held and those who desire it are communicated.

³⁵ Thus the Mass is preserved among us **in its proper use**, the use which was formerly observed in the church and which can be proved by St. Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 11:20ff. and by many statements of the Fathers. ³⁶ For Chrysostom reports how the priest stood every day, **inviting some to Communion and forbidding others to approach.** ³⁷ The ancient canons also indicate that one man officiated and communicated the other priests and deacons, ³⁸ for the words of the Nicene canon read, "After the priests the deacons shall receive the sacrament in order from the bishop or priest."

⁴⁰ Since, therefore, **no novelty** has been introduced which did not exist in the church from ancient times, and since **no conspicuous change** has been made in the public ceremonies of the Mass except that other unnecessary Masses which were held in addition to the parochial Mass, probably through abuse, have been discontinued, this manner of holding Mass ought not in fairness be condemned as heretical or unchristian. ⁴¹ In times past, even in large churches where there were many people, Mass was not held on every day that the people assembled, for according to the Tripartite History, Book 9, on Wednesday and Friday the Scriptures were read and expounded in Alexandria, and all these services were held without Mass.