

**Objection 1.** It seems that the actions performed in celebrating this mystery are not becoming. For, as is evident from its form, this sacrament belongs to the New Testament. But under the New Testament the ceremonies of the old are not to be observed, such as that the priests and ministers were purified with water when they drew nigh to offer up the sacrifice: for we read (Ex. 30:19,20): “Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet. . . when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony. . . and when they are to come to the altar.” Therefore it is not fitting that the priest should wash his hands when celebrating mass.

**Objection 2.** Further, (Ex. 30:7), the Lord commanded Aaron to “burn sweet-smelling incense” upon the altar which was “before the propitiatory”: and the same action was part of the ceremonies of the Old Law. Therefore it is not fitting for the priest to use incense during mass.

**Objection 3.** Further, the ceremonies performed in the sacraments of the Church ought not to be repeated. Consequently it is not proper for the priest to repeat the sign of the cross many times over this sacrament.

**Objection 4.** Further, the Apostle says (Heb. 7:7): “And without all contradiction, that which is less, is blessed by the better.” But Christ, Who is in this sacrament after the consecration, is much greater than the priest. Therefore quite unseemingly the priest, after the consecration, blesses this sacrament, by signing it with the cross.

**Objection 5.** Further, nothing which appears ridiculous ought to be done in one of the Church’s sacraments. But it seems ridiculous to perform gestures, e.g. for the priest to stretch out his arms at times, to join his hands, to join together his fingers, and to bow down. Consequently, such things ought not to be done in this sacrament.

**Objection 6.** Further, it seems ridiculous for the priest to turn round frequently towards the people, and often to greet the people. Consequently, such things ought not to be done in the celebration of this sacrament.

**Objection 7.** Further, the Apostle (1 Cor. 13) deems it improper for Christ to be divided. But Christ is in this sacrament after the consecration. Therefore it is not proper for the priest to divide the host.

**Objection 8.** Further, the ceremonies performed in this sacrament represent Christ’s Passion. But during the Passion Christ’s body was divided in the places of the five wounds. Therefore Christ’s body ought to be broken into five parts rather than into three.

**Objection 9.** Further, Christ’s entire body is consecrated in this sacrament apart from the blood. Consequently, it is not proper for a particle of the body to be mixed with the blood.

**Objection 10.** Further, just as, in this sacrament,

Christ’s body is set before us as food, so is His blood, as drink. But in receiving Christ’s body no other bodily food is added in the celebration of the mass. Therefore, it is out of place for the priest, after taking Christ’s blood, to receive other wine which is not consecrated.

**Objection 11.** Further, the truth ought to be conformable with the figure. But regarding the Paschal Lamb, which was a figure of this sacrament, it was commanded that nothing of it should “remain until the morning.” It is improper therefore for consecrated hosts to be reserved, and not consumed at once.

**Objection 12.** Further, the priest addresses in the plural number those who are hearing mass, when he says, “The Lord be with you”: and, “Let us return thanks.” But it is out of keeping to address one individual in the plural number, especially an inferior. Consequently it seems unfitting for a priest to say mass with only a single server present. Therefore in the celebration of this sacrament it seems that some of the things done are out of place.

**On the contrary,** The custom of the Church stands for these things: and the Church cannot err, since she is taught by the Holy Ghost.

**I answer that,** As was said above (q. 60, a. 6), there is a twofold manner of signification in the sacraments, by words, and by actions, in order that the signification may thus be more perfect. Now, in the celebration of this sacrament words are used to signify things pertaining to Christ’s Passion, which is represented in this sacrament; or again, pertaining to Christ’s mystical body, which is signified therein; and again, things pertaining to the use of this sacrament, which use ought to be devout and reverent. Consequently, in the celebration of this mystery some things are done in order to represent Christ’s Passion, or the disposing of His mystical body, and some others are done which pertain to the devotion and reverence due to this sacrament.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The washing of the hands is done in the celebration of mass out of reverence for this sacrament; and this for two reasons: first, because we are not wont to handle precious objects except the hands be washed; hence it seems indecent for anyone to approach so great a sacrament with hands that are, even literally, unclean. Secondly, on account of its signification, because, as Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. iii), the washing of the extremities of the limbs denotes cleansing from even the smallest sins, according to Jn. 13:10: “He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet.” And such cleansing is required of him who approaches this sacrament; and this is denoted by the confession which is made before the “Introit” of the mass. Moreover, this was signified by the washing of the priests under the Old Law, as Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. iii). However, the Church observes

this ceremony, not because it was prescribed under the Old Law, but because it is becoming in itself, and therefore instituted by the Church. Hence it is not observed in the same way as it was then: because the washing of the feet is omitted, and the washing of the hands is observed; for this can be done more readily, and suffices far denoting perfect cleansing. For, since the hand is the “organ of organs” (De Anima iii), all works are attributed to the hands: hence it is said in Ps. 25:6: “I will wash my hands among the innocent.”

**Reply to Objection 2.** We use incense, not as commanded by a ceremonial precept of the Law, but as prescribed by the Church; accordingly we do not use it in the same fashion as it was ordered under the Old Law. It has reference to two things: first, to the reverence due to this sacrament, i.e. in order by its good odor, to remove any disagreeable smell that may be about the place; secondly, it serves to show the effect of grace, wherewith Christ was filled as with a good odor, according to Gn. 27:27: “Behold, the odor of my son is like the odor of a ripe field”; and from Christ it spreads to the faithful by the work of His ministers, according to 2 Cor. 2:14: “He manifesteth the odor of his knowledge by us in every place”; and therefore when the altar which represents Christ, has been incensed on every side, then all are incensed in their proper order.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The priest, in celebrating the mass, makes use of the sign of the cross to signify Christ’s Passion which was ended upon the cross. Now, Christ’s Passion was accomplished in certain stages. First of all there was Christ’s betrayal, which was the work of God, of Judas, and of the Jews; and this is signified by the triple sign of the cross at the words, “These gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices.”

Secondly, there was the selling of Christ. Now he was sold to the Priests, to the Scribes, and to the Pharisees: and to signify this the threefold sign of the cross is repeated, at the words, “blessed, enrolled, ratified.” Or again, to signify the price for which He was sold, viz. thirty pence. And a double cross is added at the words—“that it may become to us the Body and the Blood,” etc., to signify the person of Judas the seller, and of Christ Who was sold.

Thirdly, there was the foreshadowing of the Passion at the last supper. To denote this, in the third place, two crosses are made, one in consecrating the body, the other in consecrating the blood; each time while saying, “He blessed.”

Fourthly, there was Christ’s Passion itself. And so in order to represent His five wounds, in the fourth place, there is a fivefold signing of the cross at the words, “a pure Victim, a holy Victim, a spotless Victim, the holy bread of eternal life, and the cup of everlasting salvation.”

Fifthly, the outstretching of Christ’s body, and the shedding of the blood, and the fruits of the Passion, are

signified by the triple signing of the cross at the words, “as many as shall receive the body and blood, may be filled with every blessing,” etc.

Sixthly, Christ’s threefold prayer upon the cross is represented; one for His persecutors when He said, “Father, forgive them”; the second for deliverance from death, when He cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” the third referring to His entrance into glory, when He said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit”; and in order to denote these there is a triple signing with the cross made at the words, “Thou dost sanctify, quicken, bless.”

Seventhly, the three hours during which He hung upon the cross, that is, from the sixth to the ninth hour, are represented; in signification of which we make once more a triple sign of the cross at the words, “Through Him, and with Him, and in Him.”

Eighthly, the separation of His soul from the body is signified by the two subsequent crosses made over the chalice.

Ninthly, the resurrection on the third day is represented by the three crosses made at the words—“May the peace of the Lord be ever with you.”

In short, we may say that the consecration of this sacrament, and the acceptance of this sacrifice, and its fruits, proceed from the virtue of the cross of Christ, and therefore wherever mention is made of these, the priest makes use of the sign of the cross.

**Reply to Objection 4.** After the consecration, the priest makes the sign of the cross, not for the purpose of blessing and consecrating, but only for calling to mind the virtue of the cross, and the manner of Christ’s suffering, as is evident from what has been said (ad 3).

**Reply to Objection 5.** The actions performed by the priest in mass are not ridiculous gestures, since they are done so as to represent something else. The priest in extending his arms signifies the outstretching of Christ’s arms upon the cross. He also lifts up his hands as he prays, to point out that his prayer is directed to God for the people, according to Lam. 3:41: “Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens”: and Ex. 17:11: “And when Moses lifted up his hands Israel overcame.” That at times he joins his hands, and bows down, praying earnestly and humbly, denotes the humility and obedience of Christ, out of which He suffered. He closes his fingers, i.e. the thumb and first finger, after the consecration, because, with them, he had touched the consecrated body of Christ; so that if any particle cling to the fingers, it may not be scattered: and this belongs to the reverence for this sacrament.

**Reply to Objection 6.** Five times does the priest turn round towards the people, to denote that our Lord manifested Himself five times on the day of His Resurrection, as stated above in the treatise on Christ’s Resurrection

(q. 55, a. 3, obj. 3). But the priest greets the people seven times, namely, five times, by turning round to the people, and twice without turning round, namely, when he says, “The Lord be with you” before the “Preface,” and again when he says, “May the peace of the Lord be ever with you”: and this is to denote the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost. But a bishop, when he celebrates on festival days, in his first greeting says, “Peace be to you,” which was our Lord’s greeting after Resurrection, Whose person the bishop chiefly represents.

**Reply to Objection 7.** The breaking of the host denotes three things: first, the rending of Christ’s body, which took place in the Passion; secondly, the distinction of His mystical body according to its various states; and thirdly, the distribution of the graces which flow from Christ’s Passion, as Dionysius observes (Eccl. Hier. iii). Hence this breaking does not imply severance in Christ.

**Reply to Objection 8.** As Pope Sergius says, and it is to be found in the Decretals (De Consecr., dist. ii), “the Lord’s body is threefold; the part offered and put into the chalice signifies Christ’s risen body,” namely, Christ Himself, and the Blessed Virgin, and the other saints, if there be any, who are already in glory with their bodies. “The part consumed denotes those still walking upon earth,” because while living upon earth they are united together by this sacrament; and are bruised by the passions, just as the bread eaten is bruised by the teeth. “The part reserved on the altar till the close of the mass, is His body hidden in the sepulchre, because the bodies of the saints will be in their graves until the end of the world”: though their souls are either in purgatory, or in heaven. However, this rite of reserving one part on the altar till the close of the mass is no longer observed, on account of the danger; nevertheless, the same meaning of the parts continues, which some persons have expressed in verse, thus:

“The host being rent—

What is dipped, means the blest;

What is dry, means the living;

What is kept, those at rest.”

Others, however, say that the part put into the chalice denotes those still living in this world. while the part kept outside the chalice denotes those fully blessed both in soul and body; while the part consumed means the others.

**Reply to Objection 9.** Two things can be signified by the chalice: first, the Passion itself, which is represented in this sacrament, and according to this, by the part put into the chalice are denoted those who are still sharers of Christ’s sufferings; secondly, the enjoyment of the Blessed can be signified, which is likewise foreshadowed

in this sacrament; and therefore those whose bodies are already in full beatitude, are denoted by the part put into the chalice. And it is to be observed that the part put into the chalice ought not to be given to the people to supplement the communion, because Christ gave dipped bread only to Judas the betrayer.

**Reply to Objection 10.** Wine, by reason of its humidity, is capable of washing, consequently it is received in order to rinse the mouth after receiving this sacrament, lest any particles remain: and this belongs to reverence for the sacrament. Hence (Extra, De Celebratione missae, chap. Ex parte), it is said: “The priest should always cleanse his mouth with wine after receiving the entire sacrament of Eucharist: except when he has to celebrate another mass on the same day, lest from taking the ablution-wine he be prevented from celebrating again”; and it is for the same reason that wine is poured over the fingers with which he had touched the body of Christ.

**Reply to Objection 11.** The truth ought to be conformable with the figure, in some respect: namely, because a part of the host consecrated, of which the priest and ministers or even the people communicate, ought not to be reserved until the day following. Hence, as is laid down (De Consecr., dist. ii), Pope Clement I ordered that “as many hosts are to be offered on the altar as shall suffice for the people; should any be left over, they are not to be reserved until the morrow, but let the clergy carefully consume them with fear and trembling.” Nevertheless, since this sacrament is to be received daily, whereas the Paschal Lamb was not, it is therefore necessary for other hosts to be reserved for the sick. Hence we read in the same distinction: “Let the priest always have the Eucharist ready, so that, when anyone fall sick, he may take Communion to him at once, lest he die without it.”

**Reply to Objection 12.** Several persons ought to be present at the solemn celebration of the mass. Hence Pope Soter says (De Consecr., dist. 1): “It has also been ordained, that no priest is to presume to celebrate solemn mass, unless two others be present answering him, while he himself makes the third; because when he says in the plural, ‘The Lord be with you,’ and again in the Secrets, ‘Pray ye for me,’ it is most becoming that they should answer his greeting.” Hence it is for the sake of greater solemnity that we find it decreed (De Consecr. dist. 1) that a bishop is to solemnize mass with several assistants. Nevertheless, in private masses it suffices to have one server, who takes the place of the whole Catholic people, on whose behalf he makes answer in the plural to the priest.