

The Holy Sacrifice Of The Mass Part XV

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THE CEREMONIES AND PRAYERS OF THE FIRST MASS TO THE END OF THE PREFACE.

When The Trumpet Was Blown

ON the high tower at the southeast corner of the sacred area now stands the chief Temple chassan or porter, with a silver trumpet in his hands watching the sun setting behind the western hills.

Gazing intently on the sky, when he sees the first star, he blows a loud blast, emblematic of the coming of the expected Messiah, and all the people in the country start for the city. When he sees the second star he blows again, the sound signifying God's providence over the world, and all the people go home.

When he sees the third star he sounds again to remind them of the trumpet tone of the Last Judgment and then the Passover has begun, "between the two vespers."

Thus when darkness deepens, they began the synagogue services, the evening prayers with Psalm, petition, versicle, response, the reading of the Old Testament relating to the feast.

Sabbaths, Mondays and Thursdays they held these services with special devotions in Temple and synagogue, and they were prolonged so that the Passover lasted till nearly midnight. This year the Passover fell on Thursday and therefore they had special devotions with the full synagogue service.

The Temple hassan, then called the chassan, first saw the evening star the Greeks called Hesperos, the Romans Venus, or any bright star, and that time they called vespers, "evening" and from that Temple time of prayer came the Vesper service of the Catholic Church.

In desert wanderings, the ram's horn called the people to prayer, but by lapse of time this was replaced by the silver trumpet, and all Temple services were regulated by the trumpet's tone. We read in the Babylonian Talmud the following.

“Mishna. In the Temple they never blew less than twenty-one times a day, nor oftener than forty-eight times. They daily blew the trumpet twenty-one times, thrice at the gates, nine times at the daily morning offering, and nine times at the daily evening offering. When additional offerings were brought, they blew nine times more. On the eve of the Sabbath they blew six times more, thrice to interdict the people from doing work, and thrice to separate the holy day from the work day. But on the eve of the Sabbath or during a festival, they blew forty-eight times; thrice at the opening of the gates, thrice at the upper gate, thrice at the lower gate, thrice at the drawing of water, thrice over the altar, nine times at the daily morning offering, nine times at the daily evening offering, nine times at the additional offerings, thrice to interdict the people from doing work, and thrice to separate the holy day from the work day.”

We have given this quotation to show how the trumpet tone sounding over the sacred city from the Temple tower regulated the movements of Passover preparation. This was the way the priests had notified the multitudes that Thursday afternoon, that they were ready to sacrifice the paschal lambs. The sound rang out again for the last time that evening “between the two vespers” when the watchers saw the third star.

At that moment Christ with His apostles, disciples, and the crowds which followed Him, ascended the stone steps on the outside leading to the Cenacle, walked over the stone roof of the adjoining building, turned to the left and entered the holy historic room. Passing through the door, each touches the Muzuzzah, the little box hanging on the right door jamb. Each recites the following prayer written on the enclosed parchment “May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out from henceforth and forever”.

They always said this prayer entering Temple or synagogue to remind them of the blood of the paschal lamb on the door-posts of their fathers the night the Hebrews were delivered from Egyptian slavery, when they became a nation through the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. Christians take holy water at the church door and cross themselves with a prayer, to remind them of their delivery through baptism from the bondage of the demon.

Origin Of The Order Of Processions

They pass by the table prepared in the middle of the room and walk towards the Bema or sanctuary where the synagogue services are to be held. According to the Temple custom the lowest in dignity goes first, then the others in order according to rank, last coming the Prince of the House of David. From this Jewish processional came the custom found in all the Christian Rites, the lowest in dignity marches first and the highest or the celebrant comes last.

The immolated lamb of Abel and of the antediluvian patriarchs, the sacrifices of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the rivers of blood reddening the Temple, the ceremonial of the synagogue, the mystic meanings of the Hebrew religion, the prophetic words of the great men of the Old Testament are about to be fulfilled, sealed up and accomplished in the awful Tragedy of Calvary the next day. Then the Temple will have fulfilled its mission, and in thirty-six years Titus with his Roman armies will take the city and destroy that sanctuary. But by the providence of God, the Temple ceremonial with all its symbolic rites had been introduced into the synagogue, and Christ was about to set His sacred seal, the sanction of His Divinity, on these synagogue and Temple rites, and incorporate them into the everlasting ceremonial of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Whence, while the Temple building passed away, its striking and imposing ceremonial comes down to us two forms, one in the synagogue the other in the Mass. The Temple ceremonies were loaded with type, image, and figure of the long-looked-for Messiah — every movement of its ministers and every object told of Him to come in the future, as now in the Mass every ceremony and object shows us that He came and fulfilled them.

They began the Passover with the synagogue service, Christ acting as the Rabbi or leader of the congregation. The words of the Liturgy were sung in chant, response, versicle and prayer, as in the early Church when there was a bishop in every city with his twelve priests, images of Christ with His twelve apostles at the Last Supper.

“Without doubt,” says St. Augustine, “that is especially to be done, which can be proved by Scripture, as the singing of hymns and Psalms, because we have the documents, example and commands of the Lord regarding these things.”

Numerous quotations from the Fathers and writers of the early Church show that the Mass was always sung by the bishop and priests. Ages afterwards, when Christians had multiplied, a priest was placed over a church as pastor. Often having no ministers to aid him the custom obtained of saying a low Mass.

The Last Supper was therefore a pontifical High Mass with Christ as the Celebrant, assisted by the apostles. To-day, when the bishop pontificates with his ministers, with choir and clergy assisting, he says the Mass more according to the Last Supper than when the priest says a low Mass. Thus the bishops have better preserved the customs and rites of the early Church.

When the bishop pontificates surrounded by his ministers, waited on by all, when the whole external ceremonial seems to refer to him, when his honors look to lift him into dignities higher than should be given any man, let the reader go back in thought to that Cenacle, that night we are describing, when the Celebrant of the Mass was the Word made flesh. There all the ceremonial of the Mass find its origin and completeness.

First Consecration Of Bishops

As God acts in the highest, Christ said the first Mass therefore not as simple priest, but as “the Pastor and Bishop of our souls.” As a Bishop He pontificated, that night and consecrated the apostles bishops so they might say the Mass with Him, and that they might consecrate bishops in the churches they were to establish.

When they went forth into the nations, when they formed a band of converts, they consecrated bishops and placed one over every church. Therefore in the early ages every church had a bishop. These ordained twelve priests forming the presbytery of the diocese, an image of the apostolic college, and later these

priests became the cathedral chapter. When the priesthood rose out of the episcopate we do not find. But centuries later the monks were ordained priests.

St. Augustine says that Christ at the Passover celebrated the evening prayers of the first day of unleaven bread. This was the synagogue service we will give.

The Lord himself revealed the very place of the Last Supper, the Sion mount, the graces of Communion, the spiritual nourishment of souls among the nations. Isaias, Israel's greatest prophet, uttered these words:

“And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.”

The Mass To Replace Pagan Worship

The chains of pagan errors, the bondage of heathen sacrifices He will destroy, the Mass will take the place of pagan worship, says the prophet in the next verse: “And He shall destroy in this mountain the face of the bond with which all people were tied, and the web that the demon began over all nations. He shall cast down death headlong forever “ etc.

Now let us penetrate into the deep meaning of this prophecy.

The word Isaias uses for mountain is har, “a hill”; the word translated “Lord” is Jehovah, and that for hosts is tsaba, “warfare,” “service,” “a disciplined army.” The word translated feast is mishteh, “drinking,” “a feast,” with the bread and wine the elements of the Last Supper and the Mass. The word translated “death,” “which he will cast down headlong forever,” is the Hebrew muth, “a violent death,” “a murder,” the demon brought on mankind because of Adam's sin; it is the word God used when He forbade under penalty of death, our first parents to eat of the forbidden fruit. The Hebrew word translated “victory” is netsach, “prominence,” “pre-eminence” foretelling the power of the prophesied Prince of Peace about to celebrate the Last Supper.

The first part of the Last Supper, that is the synagogue prayers, took place within the Bema; the “chancel” or “sanctuary”; the name is still used for sanctuary by the Greek and Oriental Christians. This Cenacle sanctuary was approached by steps, as steps lead up to the altar railing in a church. How many steps were there? We do not know. The Bema of the Cenacle is now nearly three feet higher than the floor of the nave. St. Augustine twice uses the word Bema for sanctuary. To the Manicheans he wrote, “I used to ask you in those days what was the reason you used to celebrate the Lord’s Passover generally with a lukewarm or hardly any celebration, with no watching, no long fasting, no festive solemnity, while the day Manichaeus was killed, your Bema, approached by five steps, is adorned with precious linens put before the worshipers in which you show him such honors.”

The Saviour with His apostles enter the sanctuary for celebration of the evening prayers prescribed before the Passover Supper. The seventy-two disciples and the Lord’s converts gather in the nave of the Cenacle to take part in the service before they separate into “bands “ to celebrate the feast.

Hebrew And Christian Sacramentals

We must remember that the Jewish Church, with its Temple and synagogue, its Old Testament, its religious rites coming down from Moses and the patriarchs, its traditions and sole pure worship of God amid the pagan rites, was the true spouse of Jesus Christ. The sacramentals of the Jewish Church we have described did not of themselves give grace. They were only images of the foretold glories and greater graces of the Christian sacraments. These Hebrew sacramentals Christ raised up to be the materials of the seven sacraments of the New Law. The grace and salvation of the Hebrew people depended on the pious dispositions of the worshipers, *ex opere operantis*, while the sacraments of the Church of themselves produce their effects in the soul if the receiver place no obstacle, *ex opere operato*.

The Talmud tells the time, the prayers and the ceremonial of the Passover before they sat at the table. They always began the Passover with the synagogue prayers. This was Thursday, when special services were held in all

the synagogues; this was the evening of the Passover; this was a time of special devotions in all the realms of Jewry, when each band of Jews had its own leader who led the services.

Let us see how the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the Memra, Logos, “Wisdom,” carried out the first part of the Mass. It was foretold, that according to the synagogue custom of His time, as Jews still do in our day, that He would select seven men to aid him in the ceremonial.

“Wisdom hath built himself a house, He hath hewn out seven pillars. He hath slain His victims, mingled His wine and set forth His table. He hath sent His maids to invite to the tower, and to the halls of the city. Whosoever is a little one let Him come to Me My bread and drink the wine I have prepared.”

What was the house Wisdom the Divine Word was to “build” but the Church Universal? What were the victims he had “slain” but the paschal lamb then roasting in the oven? What was the “tower” foretold but the Cenacle rising from Sion’s heights? What was the foretold “bread and wine” but that we have described ?

Origin Of The Order Of Deacons

Christ therefore acting as Rabbi about to lead in the synagogue service, chose seven men to aid Him. Who were these? history is silent. Peter, leader of the apostolic band, to whom after the resurrection the Lord gave full power to feed and govern His lambfolds and sheepfolds, as the Gospel tells in the original Greek, perhaps waited on Him at His right. James and John were Temple priests. The priest was always given the place of honour in the synagogue, perhaps they stood on the right and left of the Lord. Who were the two acting as deacons of honour and the two masters of ceremonies? we do not know. It seems that these seven officials of the synagogue were types of, or gave rise to, the assistant priest, deacon, subdeacon, deacons of honour, and masters of ceremony of the pontifical Mass. We only throw this out as a suggestion, as these officials are found in all Rites when the bishop pontificates, as in the early Church the archpriest, archdeacon and chief subdeacon, “pillars,” of the diocese, attended the bishop when he said Mass.

Often the feast was held in the nave of the synagogue building, or in a room attached, but never in the sanctuary itself. The sanctuary of the Cenacle was an enclosed place separated from the great room by a railing copied after the Temple railing separating the Holies from the Priest's Court. In this sanctuary the prayers were said, after which they reclined at the tables set in the large room called the Cenacle, the arrangement being like a church and its sanctuary.

The Origin Of The Vestment Prayers

First they silently meditate on the law relating to the Tephillin, the Greeks called Philacteries, each saying: "He commanded us to lay the Tephillin upon the hand, as a memorial of His outstretched arm, opposite the heart to indicate the duty of subjecting the longings and designs of our heart to His service, blessed be He; and upon the head, over against the brain, thereby teaching that the mind, whose seat is the brain, together with all senses and faculties, are to be subjected to His services, blessed be He, etc."

Each places his Tephillah on his arm saying: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to lay the Tephillin. Winding the Retsuah, "leather strap," around the arm and fingers, they say "And I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in justice, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercy, I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord."

Putting on the Tephillah on the forehead. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast given us command concerning the precept of the Tephillin. Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever."

They meditate on the mystery of the Tallith, "Prayer shawl," saying each in a low voice "I am here enwrapping myself in this fringed robe, in fulfillment of the command of my Creator, as it is written in the Law: 'Thou shalt make strings in the hem at the four corners of thy cloak.' And even as I cover myself with the Tallith in this world, so may my soul deserve to be clothed with a beauteous spiritual robe in the world to come, in the garden of Eden, Amen."

Putting it on they say: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to enwrap ourselves in the fringed garment.”

They first put the Tallith on their heads, then let it fall down on their shoulders the way the celebrant puts on the amice. The Jews still put on the prayer-shawls in this way.

The common belief then was that when the Messiah would come He would gather the patriarchs and all the members of the Jewish people to a great feast the prophet had foretold: “And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people, on this mountain, a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.”

Strange Ideas Held By Rabbis

The Rabbis held the most wild and exaggerated ideas regarding these words prophetic of the Last Supper. All animals used for food would be there. The Leviathan, the Behemoths with the gigantic bird Jochani. And the wine the Messiah shall use shall be made of grapes kept from the foundations of the world.

From the days of the prophets came down a tradition, crystallized into Jewish writings of the time of Christ, that the Messiah would robe Himself in seven vestments — the first of honour and glory at creation, of majesty at the Red Sea, of strength when giving the Law, or Torah on Sinai: of white, when He would blot out Israel’s sins: of zeal when He avenged them of their enemies, of justice when He would be revealed, and of red when He would take vengeance on Edom.” This last was the vision of the Lord the prophet saw when Jesus sweated blood in Gethsemane.

The commentary continues: “But the garment with which He will clothe the Messiah, its splendours will extend from one end of the world to the other, as it is written; “As a bridegroom priestly in headgear.” And Israel will be astounded at his light, and will say “Blessed the hour in which the Messiah

cometh. Blessed the womb whence He issued. Blessed the generation that shall see Him. Blessed the eye worthy to behold Him.”

“The opening of His lips is blessing and peace. His speech is a quieting of the spirit. Glory and majesty are in His vestments, and confidence and quietness in His words, and on His tongue compassion and forgiveness. His prayer is a sweetly-smelling odor, and His supplication holiness and purity. Happy Israel that these are reserved for you,” etc. The revelations coming down not only in the Bible but in sacred words of prophet, seer and holy ones of Hebrew race are about to be fulfilled in the Messiah, the Grecian Jews called Epxomenos, “The Coming One.”

Christ Chanting The Service Foretold

The synagogue services were not only sung by the Rabbi and his ministers, but the people also took part in the congregational singing. There was a night foretold by Israel’s great prophet, when the Lord Messiah would come and sing the Passover service. In the original Hebrew it is “You shall have a song as in the night of the solemn Festival, and joy of heart as when one goeth with a pipe, to come into mountain of the Lord (Sion), to the mighty One of Israel (Christ). And the Lord shall make His glorious (hod, ‘beautiful,’) voice: (gol, sound,) to be heard. The prophet foresaw Christ chanting the Last Supper service. Numberless proofs force us to believe that the Last Supper was a pontifical High Mass sung by the Lord, his apostles and the people taking part in congregational singing.

We said that the word Isaias uses is the Hebrew chag, “a sacred dance,” which is translated “solemn festival” in our Bible. Was there a dance at the Last Supper, as we understand the word? Certainly not. Why then did the prophet prophesy a dance? Let the reader observe a Pontifical High Mass while the bishop with his deacon, subdeacon, deacons of honour and ministers, robed in glorious vestments go through the ceremonial. The organ plays, the priests chant, the choir sings, and the worshiping laity fill the building. Bishop and clergy, trained for years in the service, each pass back and forth, follow rules, observe forms and rites, carry out ceremonies proper to their office,

resembling in a way the movements of a dance, and thus the prophet described the Last Supper. Whence St. Augustine says: “You hear the singers, let us hear the dancers, understand the customs of the dancers with the movement of their members. Desire is driven out, charity takes its place.” He compares the Mass to a holy dance following the Jewish idea that the Temple, Passover, and synagogue worship was a solemn festival of joy unto the Lord. The word chag, “solemnity” is used in the Old Testament a number of times for the Passover.

They are about to begin the synagogue prayers in the Cenacle, as was the custom at that time. “For what purpose should the Kiddush be recited in the synagogue? In order to afford the guests, who eat, drink and sleep in the synagogues, an opportunity to hear it. Samuel thus holds to his theory that the duty of hearing the Kiddush recited can be only acquitted in the place where the person takes his meals.”

The Lord gave special directions regarding the vestments they were to wear during the Egyptian Passover, “And thus shall you eat it, you shall gird your reins, and you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands.” By lapse of time these developed into the Passover vestments.

To Be Cont’d.