

## **Q: Do Catholics believe that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and is connected to the New Covenant instituted by Jesus?**

Absolutely! First, let's look into the Big Picture in Sacred Scripture and see how beautifully God unites the 2 Covenants, Old and New, in the sacrifice of His Son on the cross –the same sacrifice that is the center of the Eucharist.

Adam and Eve have fallen, and brought death into human life. But God eventually reaches into human history and chooses a people for Himself through Abraham. God makes a family covenant with Abraham, and over time, renews this covenant throughout the Old Testament, with promises to men like Moses and David.

In **Deuteronomy**, Moses presents this covenant to the people, emphasizing that God has “... *set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life...*” (**Deut 30:19**). With this covenant, which the Israelites had willingly made with God, came both blessings and curses, depending on whether they broke or kept the covenant. If they broke the covenant seriously enough, the agreed on, just, covenantal punishment for this could even be death! And of course even a light reading of the Old Testament shows the Israelites seriously breaking this covenant, **falling into serious idolatry and sin** over and over again!

But back up to **Gen 22** for a moment. Here, something critical happens. God tests Abraham and instructs Abraham to sacrifice his only son. (Incidentally, **Hebrews 11:17-19** reveals that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because he believed God could raise Isaac from the dead! This is the first place in all of Scripture where we see a faith in the resurrection.) So, in **Gen 22:2-8**: Abraham went “to the land of Moriah... took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac... Isaac spoke to his father Abraham. “Father!... where is the sheep for the burnt offering? My son,” **Abraham answered, “God will provide the sheep for the burnt offering.”**

Then, in response to Abraham's faithfulness, God promises to keep the Covenant **by Himself**: “**I swear by my very self...** because you acted as

*you did... I will bless you and make your descendants as countless as the stars... and in your descendants all the nations of the earth will find blessing, because you obeyed my command” (Gen 22:15-18).*

In this verse, one of the most significant passages in all of the Old Testament, God has sworn now to keep the Covenant He has made with His people **by Himself**, independent of their faithfulness or unfaithfulness **–and no matter how idolatrous they would become.**

And on this very mountain, God indeed would keep the covenant. This would be the very place where Jesus would be crucified, some 2000 years later! Just as Abraham prophetically promised, God himself would provide the sacrifice -not Abraham’s son, carrying “*the wood*” for the sacrifice, but God’s very own Son **–giving His life for us...** “*In this is love... that He loved us and sent His Son as expiation for our sin.*” (1 John 4:10).

Did Jesus *have* to die on the cross? No! God could have chosen any way He wanted to forgive our sins, destroy death and the work of the Devil, and restore the broken covenant He had made with His people. He could have used power and might **–sending legions of angels in some great show of power and glory.** But instead, He chooses love and mercy, for “*God so loved the world, He sent His only Son*” (John 3:16). And in John 15:13, we read that “*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*”

And this is exactly what Jesus does. Out of love, He lays down His life to take on our sins. Jesus fulfils the Old Covenant perfectly and then takes on the just punishments of this broken covenant Himself, instituting a New Covenant with new graces (the Sacraments) and a **new sacrifice**: His death on the Cross. Jesus then clearly links this sacrifice to the New Covenant at the Last Supper, saying, “**Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins**” (Mat 26:30). This is the **ONLY** time Jesus uses the word “**covenant**” in the whole New Testament –at the institution of the Eucharist! Profound!!!

But now let us take a quick, Scriptural look at this sacrifice as it appears in Heaven. In Gen 4:18, we read where Malchizedek comes out to Abraham at Salem (present day Jerusalem) offering “*bread and wine*”.

And in **Hebrews 7:17** we read the New Testament fulfillment of this text -that Jesus, who changed bread and wine into His body and blood, is “*a priest forever according to the order of Malchizedek*”. A priest offers sacrifice, and Jesus will be offering this sacrifice “*forever*”. Then, in **Heb 9:24** we also read that Jesus is appearing **NOW** before the Father on our behalf: “*For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands... but heaven itself, that he might NOW appear before God on our behalf*” - in other words, this is going on **NOW -and without end!!!** And finally, when St John is given a vision of Jesus in Heaven in **Rev 5:6**, what does he see? The Lion of the tribe of Judah? The son of Man coming on the clouds in glory? No. He sees Jesus “*standing in the midst of the throne*”, as a “*Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.*” Here, Jesus is in Heaven, constantly offering the sacrifice of Himself to the Father on our behalf.

It is this **same**, once-for-all sacrifice (cf. **Hebrews 10:10-12** where it clearly says that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is “*once for all*” -not a new sacrifice, or a re-sacrifice, but the **SAME** sacrifice) of Jesus Himself that, by the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ words of consecration made through the priest, is miraculously made present on every Catholic altar at Mass -outside of space and time, just as it exists in Heaven. We then offer this sacrifice of the Son to the Father **on our behalf** as the only worthy, acceptable sacrifice for our sins. This is the heart of the Eucharist! The sacrifice of the Son offered to the Father. Heaven literally touching down to Earth. An awesome, miraculous mystery!

May your Holy Thursday be blessed!

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**Heb 7:17** Jesus is “*a priest forever according to the order of Malchizedek*” (a priest offers sacrifice)

**Heb 9:24** *For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands... but heaven itself, that he might NOW appear before God on our behalf* -i.e. this is going on **NOW and without end!!!**

**Rev 5:6** “Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne... a Lamb [Jesus] that seemed to have been slain.”

**Heb 10:10-12** “once for all”

**Gen 14:18**

John 15:13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

**Deut 30:19** “I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life...”

**Gen 22** “I swear by my very self... because you acted as you did... I will bless you and make your descendants as countless as the stars... and in your descendants all the nations of the earth will find blessing, because you obeyed my command.”

Gen 22:6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac

Gen 22:7 Isaac spoke to his father Abraham. “Father!... where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

Gen 22:7-8 “My son,” Abraham answered, “God will provide the sheep for the burnt offering.” Then the two walked on together.

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When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he bound\* his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar.<sup>c</sup> 10Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.<sup>d</sup> 11But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. 12“Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel. “Do not do the least thing to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold from me your son, your only one.”<sup>e</sup> 13Abraham looked up and saw a single ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son.\* 14Abraham named that place Yahweh-yireh;\* hence people today say, “On the mountain the LORD will provide.”

15\* A second time the angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven 16<sup>f</sup> and said: “I swear by my very self—oracle of the LORD—that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your son, your only one, 17I will bless you and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the

sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants will take possession of the gates of their enemies,<sup>g</sup> 18and in your descendants all the nations of the earth will find blessing, because you obeyed my command.”[http://www.usccb.org/bible/genesis/22 - 01022018-h](http://www.usccb.org/bible/genesis/22-01022018-h)

Mat 26:30 “**Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant**, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”

It is this same once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Himself that, by the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ words of consecration made through the priest, is miraculously made present on every Catholic altar outside of space and time, just as it exists in Heaven. We then offer this sacrifice of the Son to the Father on our behalf as the only worthy, acceptable sacrifice for our sins. This is the heart of the Mass! The sacrifice of the Son offered to the Father.