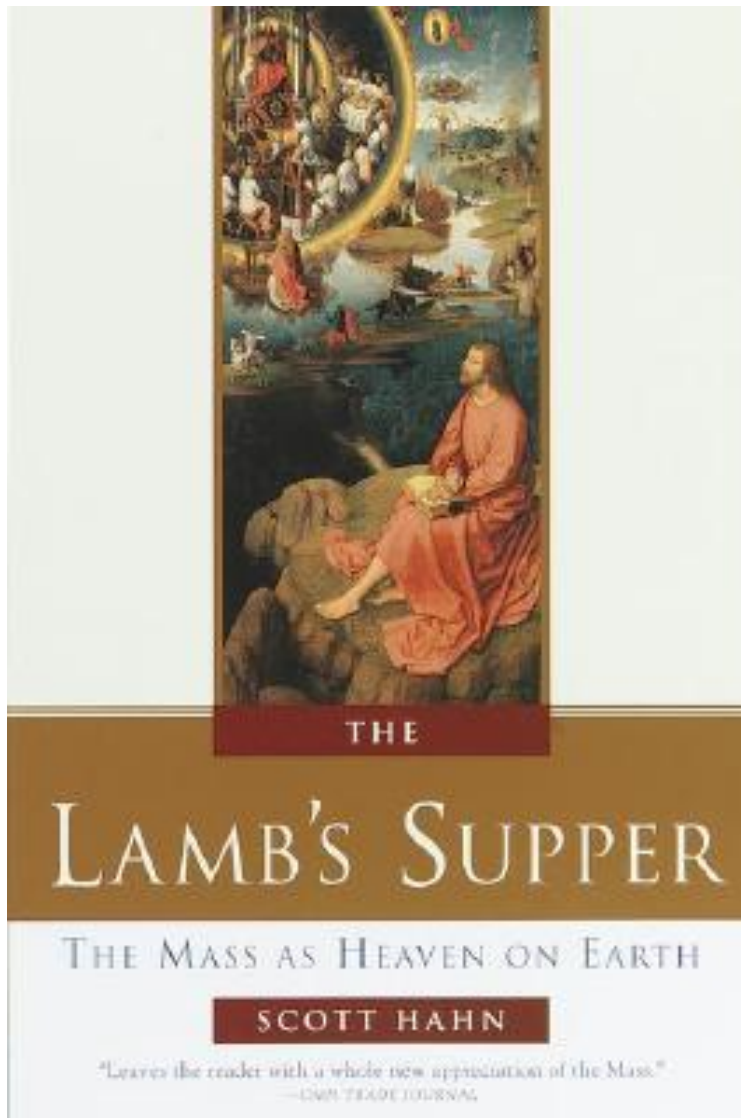


A Summary of *The Lamb's Supper* by Scott Hahn



A Summary of *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn

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About the Author

Scott Hahn is a Catholic Theologian and Apologist with a substantial amount of experience as a Protestant minister before his conversion. He acquired his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, after originally graduating from Grove City College, Pennsylvania. After becoming Catholic, Hahn went back to school to get his PhD in systematic theology from Marquette University.

Currently, Hahn is a theology professor at Franciscan University of Steubenville and Saint Vincent College. He has been a host of his own show on EWTN, and is a notable author of many books including, *Hail Holy Queen*, *Rome Sweet Home*, *Catholic for a Reason*, *Lord, Have Mercy*, and many more.

General Overview

In *The Lamb's Supper*, Scott Hahn proposes that the Book of Revelation depicts the Mass as heaven on Earth, and that Jesus' second coming, or *Parousia*, in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist. Using his own learning experience of attending his first Mass when he was a Protestant, Hahn delves into the history of the Book of Revelation, the teaching of the Church Fathers, other ancient missals and writings, as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to explain how the Book of Revelation is God's way of directing the early Christians into the New Covenant and to Heaven on Earth in the Mass.

First, Hahn recognizes the history of sacrifice, Christ's title as Lamb, and the Mass' continual teaching throughout the centuries. He then dissects the Mass into parts so the reader understands that the Mass is primarily Scripture based. To further illustrate how Mass is Heaven on Earth, Hahn then takes parts from the Book of Revelation and applies them to each part of the Mass defining people, symbolism, and rituals. The Church Fathers preached this very concept, and the idea of Mass as Heaven on Earth is not new or void. It is still very much alive within the Church today – as shown in the Catechism.

Then once Hahn establishes that the Mass is Heaven on Earth, he describes how that should change our behavior at Mass and in our everyday lives. The Mass should be taken more seriously and with increased reverence. We are called to then live out our baptismal promises and duties that the New Covenant assigned to us. We choose to partake in the family of God. Hahn expands on the familial relationship we share with God and places us within the Trinity. This familial bond brings us intimately close to Christ as His bride, as “Christ and the Church celebrate their wedding feast and consummate their marriage” at the altar (137).

Hahn concludes with thoughts on the nature of sin and the battle raging between God and Satan, catching us in the middle. However, Christ's side is abounding with power, love, and mercy, and all of these are infinitely greater than the powers of evil. Yet we still have to battle with temptation and sin, and we can do so through prayer and reflection. By joining God's family in the New Covenant, we choose the winning side, the side where family wins and the Lamb conquers.

Introduction

Hahn introduces *The Lamb's Supper* with something as familiar as the Mass, but also introduces the often puzzling Book of Revelation. He then bridges the two by saying that the “key to understanding the Mass is within the biblical Book of Revelation – and, further, that the Mass is the only way a Christian can truly make sense of the Book of Revelation” (4). In this way, Mass is Heaven on Earth. We enter Heaven each and every Mass, regardless of the preaching style, cantor's voice, or personal feelings.

This is not a modern concept; in fact, it has been around since John's vision and supported by the Catholic Church. Hahn also makes note that *The Lamb's Supper* is not a "Bible study," rather, it is the "practical application of just one aspect of the Book of Revelation" (5).

In Heaven Right Now: What I found at My First Mass

In 1985, when Hahn was a Protestant Minister, out of curiosity, he attended a Catholic Mass, not intending to participate, just to spectate. The first thing that struck Hahn about the Mass was that Scripture appeared to be before him as he heard passages from all over the Bible within the context of the Prayers of the Mass. Then, at the moment of consecration Hahn felt his doubts drain away with the words "This is my body..." As the congregation sang *Lamb of God*, Hahn was reminded of the Book of Revelation where Jesus is referred to as the lamb at least twenty-eight times.

Hahn kept returning to Mass day after day, unveiling new Scripture passages in the Mass, but Revelation captured him the most. Now he wanted to stand up and proclaim – "Hey, everybody. Let me show you where you are in the Apocalypse! Turn to chapter four, verse eight. You're in heaven right now" (10). Although proud of his discovery, Hahn soon realized that the Church Fathers have been preaching the Book of Revelation in relationship to the Mass for hundreds of years. Even Vatican II defines the liturgy as Heaven and the Book of Revelation – all intertwining. "The images of liturgy alone can make that strange book make sense," says Hahn. For Revelation is a book about the second coming of the Messiah, and when does Jesus come again? In the Mass! So it is now that Hahn asks questions about the Mass as the son of his Father, rather than an accuser or mere spectator.

Given for You: The Story of Sacrifice

We often take the title 'Lamb' for granted; however, it is not like the other powerful, more kingly titles we attribute to Jesus Christ. And although others say Jesus is like a lamb, John is the only writer in the Bible to call Jesus "the Lamb" – and this title is central to the Mass as well as the Book of Revelation.

Why is Jesus called "the lamb?" From the very beginning, lambs were associated with sacrifice – except for Melchizedek whose sacrifice involved bread and wine, just as Jesus would do later in history. Also, the story of Abraham, in allegorical context, foreshadowed Christ as the lamb who God, Himself, would provide. For the most part, animals were primarily the sacramental offering for many reasons – they are a symbol of giving back to God what is His, a symbol of thanks, sealing an agreement or covenant, and an act of sorrow for sins by giving an animal's life instead of the person's own.

In Jerusalem, altars at the Temple constantly burned with sacrificial animals before the Holy of Holies to offer as retribution for the nation's sins, and before the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., 256,500 lambs had been sacrificed to God.

But perhaps the most influential sacrifice of a lamb, the Passover, correlates to Jesus because at the Passover, a lamb was to be sacrificed and eaten so that the firstborn of the household may be saved. So too does our Lord, our Lamb, die so our lives may be saved. John accounts that "it was the day of preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour" (John 19:14), which is important because he realized that the priests were beginning the sacrifice of lambs in the Temple, but it was also the beginning of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Jesus' bones were also not broken, just as Scripture says that the Passover lamb's bones shall not be broken. More so, the hyssop branch that was offered to Jesus is the same branch that would sprinkle the blood of the Passover lamb. Such textual and lawful correlations made Jesus the perfect sacrifice to God.

Jesus is not only the victim of sacrifice, but He is also the priest, as at the Last Supper, who institutes the Sacrament. He had to be both the priest and the lamb “because only a sacrificial lamb fits the divine pattern of our salvation,” and because as God, He is the only one who could offer Himself (24).

Today, we can apply this to our lives by partaking in our part of the New Covenant with God – by celebrating the feast and eating of the Lamb that was slain. The Mass is Christ’s ultimate sacrifice on the Cross.

From the Beginning: The Mass of the First Questions

Ever since the Mass was instituted, pagans continually let their imaginations run wild about Christian Sacraments and rituals, since Christians were not to discuss theological issues with them. Cannibalism was a common accusation of the early Church because Christians were eating the body and blood of a human. Yet Christians were firm in their beliefs, and wrote them down in the *Didache*, or the teaching of the apostles. The *Didache* gives an outline of the liturgy and Eucharistic Prayer (i.e. a missal) that we still use to this day, and the *Didache* uses the word “sacrifice” four times to describe the Eucharist.

Another source of a sacrificial meal in ancient Israel is the *todah*, which means “thank offering.” Family and friends would come together and practice this “powerful expression of confidence in God’s sovereignty and mercy” (32). Many of the Psalms are referenced in this piece, some of which quoted by Jesus Himself, signifying Jesus’ trust in God. It is evident that “both the *Torah* and the Eucharist present their worship through word and meal” (33).

Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, also wrote extensively on the Eucharist. He “spoke of the Sacrament with a realism that must have been shocking to people unfamiliar with the mysteries of the Christian faith,” as he spoke of the Eucharist (34).

Justin of Samaria used the same graphic realism as Ignatius when he preached the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Even in the early centuries, Justin explained the correlation between Christ’s sacrifice and the Passover as well as Temple sacrifices. Doctrines as these consistently remained universal throughout the world, but the liturgy was specialized to the local area of each Bishop; however, all liturgies had the same groundwork and were “kept in common” (36).

Finally, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* included prayers and liturgical roles for the Christian leaders and lay community. Hippolytus of Rome compiled *The Apostolic Tradition*, which set the Roman Church’s traditions and prayers from the apostles. Bear in mind though, at this time in history, many people could not read, making the Mass their main encounter of Scripture, and thus making them ignorant to many of the other theological books.

Taste and See (and Hear and Touch) the Gospel: Understanding the Parts of the Mass

“Real loves are loves we live with constancy, and that constancy shows itself in routine,” comments Hahn as he describes why the Mass as a routine exemplifies our love for God. He continues to say that “routines let good habits take over, freeing the mind and heart to move onward and upward” (41). Therefore, the liturgy routine is a highly effective habit that encompasses our entire being, which helps us worship God and live our lives every day.

With this introduction, Hahn then begins to take the reader through an overview of the parts of the Mass. For starters, the Mass is divided into two essential liturgies: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist; however, both make up one sacrifice – one Mass.

The Mass begins with the sign of the cross, which is a very powerful sign of the faith that has been used since Christ's crucifixion. "When we cross ourselves, we renew the covenant that began with our baptism," and as brothers and sisters, before Mass, we actively renew this covenant together (44).

Also early on in the Mass, just as the *Didache* prescribes, we ask for forgiveness of all our sins, and sing the *Kyrie* to ask the mercy of the Trinity. Shortly after the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, a prayer from the second century, is prayed thanking God for the blessing we just asked for. The *Gloria* is a symbol of our trust in God and His truth and mercy.

Next come readings from the Old Testament, a psalm, a reading from the New Testament and then the Gospel reading. Saint Paul says that "faith comes by hearing" (Rom. 10:17), so it is only appropriate that Scripture be read and embedded in the Mass, after all, as stated earlier, it was not a common skill to read in the early centuries – not to mention it was very expensive. Therefore, the Church generated a *lectionary*, which divides the biblical readings into three parts. The Word of God should be venerated just as the Heavenly Host during the Mass because we are bound to God by His Word, which is just as important as His body.

After the readings, the priest often gives a homily embellishing on the readings and applying them to everyday life. The Nicene Creed is then recited by the parish, which precisely outlines the Catholic Faith, and with the conclusion of this prayer, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins.

At this point, the gifts are brought forward. These gifts of bread and wine are not anything spectacular, but they are what we have; they are temporal objects that God makes divine in the Mass. These gifts with our hearts symbolize how "everything we have goes on the altar, to be made holy by Christ" (52). This is followed by the *Sanctus* or *Holy, Holy, Holy*, and then the Eucharistic Prayer. Hahn then discusses the various parts of the Eucharistic Prayer including the Epiclesis, the Narrative of Institution, the Remembrance, the Offering, Intercessions, and the Doxology.

Next we recite the Lord's Prayer because the Mass fulfills it perfectly, and move into the Communion Rite. In this part of the Mass, we join in our familial bond with the rest of the faithful. This is why the sign of peace is given, to "make peace with our neighbor before we approach the altar" (56). The *Lamb of God* recalls the Passover, we reiterate the words of the centurion at the Cross, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you..." (Mt. 8:8), and receive Jesus, body and blood, in the Eucharist.

Mass then ends with a sending out for use to "live the mystery, the Sacrifice, we have just celebrated, through the splendor of ordinary life in the home and in the world" (57).

"I Turned to See": The Sense amid the Strangeness

This chapter of the book begins the investigation into the Book of Revelation. The first problem when trying to figure the book out is finding a form of organization, which does not exist. Many people have tried to apply Revelation to a certain time period, but the Book of Revelation is for Christians of all time. What the book reveals is parts of the Mass, Hahn concludes. A lot of Revelation Scripture is found in the Mass.

But why did John chose to write about the Mass in such an odd way that often seems unclear? Well, to a first-century Jew, the images portrayed would not have been very obscure. Their New Jerusalem would be like us combining "Washington, D.C., Wall Street, Oxford, and the Vatican" (68). But at the same time, John's revelation showed one worship between heaven and earth, between man and angels.

Also, since John wrote the Book of Revelation around 70 A.D., the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, which would have been a catastrophic event to the Jews. But Jesus Christ built up a new temple in three days –

Christ's mystical body. Revelation is about the Old Covenant being destroyed and the New Covenant being established through Christ's Sacrifice.

Who's Who in Heaven: Revelation's Cast of Thousands

Depending on the type of interpretation one holds of the Book of Revelation, one can have various identifications for the beasts and people. And Revelation "does describe a particular period of history, but it also describes every period of history, and all of history, as well as the course of life for each and every one of us" (73).

For starters, John may or may not be the author of the book; however, there are many correlations to the apostle John which give us a more in-depth picture of Revelation. The author though is not vital to the interpretation of the book in this context.

The lamb in Revelation is clearly Jesus Christ, and the woman clothed with the sun is His mother, Mary, who is suffering what may not be physical pain, but pain in her soul. This image of the woman is the center of Revelation as "it reveals heaven, but in images of earth" (77). As John describes the woman, he is telling us about the New Covenant that Mary will bear. This woman also symbolizes the Church, being safeguarded and untouchable to Satan.

The first beast represents all corrupt political authority in history, and the "corrupting spiritual force behind these institutions" (82). With its daunting power, the first beast can represent any suppressing government body or force that we seem weak against.

The second beast can be connected with the first-century corrupted priesthood, as it looks like the divine lamb but is twisted in its appearance. This warping of reality is symbolic of evil and represents misguided worship. Here the debate of the number 666 also comes up. This number can mean any number of things from representing a person, a place, or humanity stuck in the sixth day of creation. But the main point of the beast is that we are fighting forces of evil, and that the solution is the Mass, "when heaven touches down to save an earth under siege" (85).

Angels abound in the Book of Revelation as messengers that are swift and vigilant in their efforts to help us. They appear as people, mystical beings, controlling the elements, and as warriors fighting for God and us.

Aside from all the atypical beasts and creatures, the most prolific 'being' in the Revelation are normal people from the twelve tribes and every nation. Among these people there are martyrs and virgins who give up their lives to God.

At the end of this chapter, Hahn comments that these characters are not hard to identify because "often the deepest meaning in Scripture is very near to the heart of each of us, and the widest application is very close to home" (89). And it is in the universal Church, the Catholic Church – especially the Mass –, that Revelation is at home.

Apocalypse Then! The Battles of Revelation and the Ultimate Weapon

Since Revelation was written for all peoples in all ages, the literal meaning within battles may or may not be a specific past or future event. John rarely uses names and never appoints a date, but we do know that John was writing in a time of war, which may explain the reason he used the imagery he that he did.

In a spiritual interpretation of the text, many events and people can be correlated with people and events in Revelation to reveal other truths about Jesus. For example, when Jesus says He will be coming “soon,” He will come soon at the end of time, but He also comes to us “soon” in every Mass. Jesus’ *Parousia* or returning presence in the New Kingdom or New Covenant, is Jesus being present at Mass because “the Church is the kingdom already begun on earth, and it is the place of the *Parousia* in every Mass” (94).

The Book of Revelation also echoes the Old Testament as it references Ezekiel, Sodom and Egypt, the fall of Jericho, and the seven plagues. Sodom and Egypt both turned from God, and now, claims John, it was Jerusalem’s turn to be destroyed since they, too, were turning their back on God. It is interesting to note that although Jerusalem was burned, the upper room where the Eucharist was instituted did not burn and was preserved.

But it was the believers who were marked by the sign of baptism that were saved. The 144,000 from the twelve tribes fled to the mountains during the Jewish War, and not one Christian was killed. With this sign, Christians also relied on the angels as allies, and “the Book of Revelation makes it clear that even though every believer must battle against powerful supernatural forces, no Christen ever fights alone” (98).

Also in no way is John being anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish by portraying the Jewish War in such a harsh way. Israel should be regarded as our history and example. “You cannot be a good Catholic until you’ve fallen in love with the religion and the people of Israel” (100). But at that time in history, Christians were very scared at the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. John gave them answers in ways they understood and guided them to the hope of the New Covenant. The Mass was embedded in the New Covenant, and was where early Christians found comfort during such persecution. Armies and generals will fall, but Christ the Lamb will always triumph with His heavenly strength.

Judgment Day: His Mercy is Scary

God has asked us to join His family every time He makes a covenant. When we sin, we deny keeping our end of the covenant and thus, God judges according to how we live and sin. However, His judgments are not vindictive acts; rather, they are acts of a father teaching His child discipline in love.

Bearing a familial covenant in mind will help one understand the judgments in Revelation. John shows Jesus as a king: leader of royalty, military, and judiciary system. John sets up the scene as a courtroom with witnesses. The sentence on Jerusalem for its lack of honor towards God was its destruction in 70 A.D.

At this point, Hahn claims that “only a calamity can save us” (110). When this happens to a nation, “God intervenes by allowing economic depression, foreign conquest, or natural catastrophe” and these are considered “the most merciful of wake-up calls” (111). This is how God showed His mercy on Jerusalem – by executing judgment.

Such ‘wake-up calls’ can also happen to good Christians, but Christians can find the good in even the most disastrous of events. Judgment is not just for when we die and stand before God, but we stand before God each time we approach the altar at Mass. At Mass, we again bind ourselves to the covenant with God by asking for mercy and repenting for our sins.

Lifting the Veil: How to See the Invisible

As discussed above, the term *Parousia* means “a real, personal, living, lasting, and active presence,” and this is the term John uses to show that Jesus’ “coming takes place right now” (116). Again, this shows the Mass as Heaven on Earth, which is not a new idea by any means. The Mass as heaven on earth is promulgated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and all the way back to the Church Fathers.

On pages 119-120, Hahn cites numerous examples of liturgical imagery with the book of Revelation; everything from vestments, to prayers, to the Eucharistic Host. Everything in the Apocalypse appears also in the Mass. Even how the chapters are divided correspond to the parts of the Mass.

But why does John use earthly terms to describe such a transcendent and immaterial event as the Mass? Hahn suspects that “God revealed heavenly worship in earthly terms so that humans—who, for the first time, were invited to participate in heavenly worship—would know how to do it,” and that is the purpose of the Book of Revelation: to be “a visionary reflection that reveals a norm” (122). The book gives instruction to not just give away the Old Covenant, but to intensify it and encompass all of God’s promises and mercy – including heaven.

John also expresses that the union of heaven and earth in the Eucharist is like the union between a husband and a wife. “St. Paul describes the Church as the bride of Christ—and Revelation unveils that bride” (125). This unveiling also goes back to Jesus on the Cross as the veil in the temple was torn so that all could see God, not just the high priests. “Heaven and earth could now embrace in intimate love” (126).

This intimate love with God is the reason we say “lift up our hearts to the Lord,” in order that we give our souls and minds up to God alone. We should leave our earthly desires and woes behind and fully partake in the heaven that is right before us because God calls every one of us to a “heavenly banquet, to a love embrace, to Zion, to judgment, to battle. To Mass” (129).

Worship Is Warfare: Which Will You Choose: Fight or Flight?

Hell appears to be everywhere this day in age just waiting to consume and destroy us, but only we can make the decision to fight or flight. Most turn away from reality because it may seem too painful to bear, but it is impossible to flee from. Either we fight or we die. However, John alludes that we have two-thirds of the angels on our side and God’s infinite love.

And what about Jesus’ second coming? Many Christians believe that it will be full of wrath and terror, but that does not fit in with God and Jesus’ past history of loving fatherhood. “Viewing God’s judgment in terms of divine fatherhood does not lower the standard of justice, or lessen the severity of judgment; fathers generally require more from their sons and daughters than judges from defendants” (135). For this reason, Hahn believes that Jesus’ Second Coming is His coming in the Eucharist at Mass. Christ wants us there as His bride. An intimate communion with His Church is the reason He came and died on a cross. Therefore, “history achieves its goal, because there Christ and the Church celebrate their wedding feast and consummate their marriage” (137).

At this point the battle seems won and complete, but we must keep fighting to bring every person to the feast. We begin this battle by dealing with our most dangerous enemies: the sin within ourselves. From this point we can then battle with society, but not before we conquer the battle within ourselves. Mass and Confession are good places for self-recollection because it brings us intimately close to God.

God’s side of the battle clearly outweighs the adversary. We have countless numbers of angels, popes, saints, martyrs, and the faithful throughout the world. But we cannot just jump into the battle uneducated—we cannot conquer demons if we are not strong in our faith. Christ shines as our light, and enemies know better than to attack in broad daylight; therefore, demon’s know they are weaker when Christ’s light shines through our souls. Yet the battles that require the most heroism are those we fight within ourselves and are only seen by our heavenly Father. They are the true victories.

Yes, “the end is near—as near as your parish Church. And it’s something you should be running to, not from” (145).

Parish the Thought: Revelation as Family Portrait

When John speaks of families in Revelation, he does not just mean our typical nuclear family; he means extended family which would make up a tribe or clan. When a new member would enter the tribe, they “would seal the covenant bond by swearing a solemn oath, sharing a common meal, or offering a sacrifice” (147). These rites are exactly how God engages us to join His family.

A name and a sign were the main identifications for a family in the ancient world. Members of God’s family bear a mark on their brow, claims John, and we mark ourselves still today with the sign of the cross. Christianity is also the only religion that shares a familial relationship with and in God. God is a family because He is the Father, the Son, and the love between the two (i.e. the Holy Spirit). Furthermore, we share life within this Trinity as sons and daughters of the Son. And at Mass we renew our familial covenant by continuing to give up our old name, just as a bride does for her groom, and take on our new name in Christ. The Mass also “makes present, in time, what the Son has been doing from all eternity: loving the Father as the Father loves the Son, giving back the gift He received from the Father” (151).

Yet we know that humans are not capable of loving fully like God, which is why God gave us grace, because “grace makes up for the weakness of human nature” (151). We receive this grace through the Eucharist; through Jesus’ perfect humanity. In this way, we can then enter into the Trinity with God, and then we will understand why priests are called fathers, and nuns are called sisters, and how everyone is our brothers and sisters in Christ. We all belong to the communion of saints, and are therefore called to love one another, even if we do not like one another!

Rite Makes Might: The Difference Mass Makes

From the moment one walks in the Church doors and dips his hands into the holy water to bless himself, he renews his baptismal promises and duties of the New Covenant. One then prays next to the same angels who will hold each soul accountable for each prayer made. One hears the Word of God and swears to live by it.

These promises we make each time we approach Heaven in the Mass should not be taken lightly. We should approach the Eucharist purely with sincere repentance for our sins. “We want the blessing of the covenant, and not the curse” (161), so it is beneficial to frequent the Sacrament of Confession.

Hahn then emphasizes the fact that Heaven is right now; Jesus’ *Parousia* is at every Mass, and Jesus calls us all to join Him in the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (163).