**Liturgy Matters Lesson #29**

**Jesus as Sacrifice in the Mass**

**By Bishop Chad Zielinski**

I am Bishop Chad Zielinski, serving the Diocese of New Ulm. Thank you for joining me and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us as we continue our lessons on "What Happens at Mass."

Two things at least are striking to us in the sign that Jesus made during this supper the night before he died. First, his use of bread and wine and the context of a meal. He is using these basic symbols of human life together, that is, the symbols of love, desire, communion; and he is declaring them to be his voluntary death. What is death for him is meant to be nourishment for us. In the signs of the meal that he selects, he is conscious that he holds all of Israel and all her history in his hands as he takes up bread and wine, and he identifies that whole history with himself and with the death he will undergo the next day, saying over it, “This is my body, this is my blood.” The second thing striking is the sign that Jesus made is the language he uses. We call it sacrificial language even if the word sacrifice does not appear. His is “a body handed over.” His “blood poured out” to establish a “new and eternal covenant.” The repetition of this sign and Jesus' words around it certainly prepared the way for the Church to understand the Eucharist and the death of Jesus as a sacrifice. As the Church continues to celebrate the Eucharist through her first generations, she eventually comes to understand that Christ's death is, in fact, the sacrifice against which all others are measured and consequently eclipsed.

Throughout all this action and the accompanying words, it remains important for us to remember with attention that it all happens with the bread and wine that we brought; for this is how our communion in the one sacrifice of Christ is accomplished. It is our lives over which Jesus' once-pronounced words continue to be pronounced. And it is under these words, under this blessing, that our lives are transformed and are allowed to become and to declare his voluntary death, his sacrifice.

Saint Leo the Great expressed it this way:

“Sharing the body and blood of Christ causes nothing less than our passing over into what we receive, and then in spirit and in flesh we carry him everywhere, the one in whom we were dead, buried and rose again.”

Thank you for joining me today in this lesson on “Jesus as Sacrifice in the Mass.” I look forward to sharing Lesson #30 with you next week as we continue our lessons on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Let us keep one another in prayer. May God bless you and your families.