

HOLY



MASS

An Explanation of the Spiritual
and Doctrinal Meaning of the
Mass and Its Ceremonies

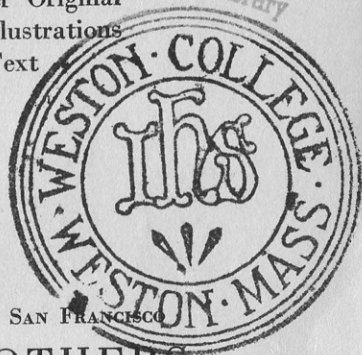
Freely Adapted from the
Translation of Otilie Boediker

by

REV. WINFRID HERBST, S.D.S.

Author of "Talks for Boys and Girls"

With 19 Mass Pictures after Original
Drawings and 28 Other Illustrations
Accompanying the Text



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DEDICATION.

Gratefully and Respectfully Dedicated to
The Primal Author of This Book,
THE RT. REV. MSGR. GUGLIELMO REYNA,
DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY,
CANON OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF TURIN,
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P R E F A C E

THIS book is, as it were, a continuation of "Eucharistic Whisperings," which have found such great favor throughout the country and have met with general approval, for reasons that can be deduced from the following: "There is, it seems, deep down in human nature a certain instinctive craving for the adequate expression of its needs and emotions; hence, the spiritual guide who helps us most is he who can interpret ourselves to ourselves; and to nobody do we feel a deeper gratitude than to the one who can put into simple words the vague longings that we know not how to utter." Though written in the spirit of "Eucharistic Whisperings," this volume on the Holy Mass is yet different, inasmuch as it does not so easily lend itself as a book of prayer, abstracting from lengthier meditation.

The adaptation is often free, and much new matter has been added. In order that the book might be a running commentary on the Mass, almost all the sacred prayers found in the Ordinary of the Mass have been inserted at the proper places, the English translation as found in "The New Missal for Every Day," by Father Lasance, being used. It was also thought advisable concisely to explain the various parts of the Mass by explanatory notes inserted in the text at the proper place. These notes, which appear in smaller type, have been taken from "Read Mass With the Priest," by Father W. R. Kelly. An Appendix has been added, the brief notes on the altar, vestments, etc. contained therein

being likewise taken from the above-mentioned works of Father Lasance and Father Kelly.*

This book can, accordingly, be profitably used for spiritual reading and meditation on the Sacrifice of the Mass and for a better understanding of that Sacrifice through the devout study thereof. Thus it will do its humble share to make the Mass better known and more dearly loved,—all the more so because the treatment of this sacred subject is here both deeply spiritual and theologically solid.

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SALVATORIAN SEMINARY,
ST. NAZIANZ, WIS.
FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING,
1931.

* NOTE BY PUBLISHERS: "Read Mass With the Priest" by *Rev. W. R. Kelly* mentioned above is a part of "The New Missal for Every Day" by *Father Lasance*. It is a simple plan, by which the laity may easily learn to use Father Lasances' New Missal and thus say the same prayers as the priest and exactly follow Holy Mass in all its parts. "The New Missal" by *Father Lasance* can be had from any bookseller.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	vi, vii
INTRODUCTION	1

CHAPTER 1.

<i>The Ends of Sacrifice.</i> Adoration.—Thanksgiving.—Reparation.—Petition.—Man's Inability.—But Holy Mass Unites Heaven and Earth. .	10
--	----

CHAPTER 2.

<i>The Ambassador and His Credentials.</i> The Priest Approaches the Altar.—The Character of the Priest.—The Ambassador of Christ.—He Shows his Credentials.—The Opening Prayer. . . .	21
--	----

CHAPTER 3.

<i>Sin and the Forgiveness of Sin.</i> The Confiteor.—The Lesson the Confiteor Gives.—The Priest Ascends the Altar.—The Introit.	30
--	----

CHAPTER 4.

<i>Prayer and Song.</i> Kyrie Eleison.—The Gloria.—Dominus Vobiscum.—A Greeting Full of Hope.—Its Echo in the Hearts of the Faithful.—Love of God and the Neighbor.	41
---	----

CHAPTER 5.

<i>Let Us Pray.</i> The Prayer or Collect.—The Best Time for Prayer.—Neglect in Praying the Mass.—The Mass a Golden Key.—Through Christ our Lord.	59
---	----

CHAPTER 6.

<i>Learning to Know Him Who Is Coming.</i> Announcement.—The Epistle.—The Gospel.—Learning to Know the Savior.—The Creed. .	70
---	----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7.

<i>Bread and Wine.</i> The Gifts Are Brought to the Altar.—The Offertory.—The Offering of the Bread.—The Mixing of Water With the Wine.—The Lavabo and the Prayers That Follow.—The Secret Prayers.	85
---	----

CHAPTER 8.

<i>Lift Up Your Hearts!</i> Singing the Praises of God.—The Preface.—Always and Everywhere.—Man's Sacred Duty.—Everywhere: Our Missionaries.—Our Mediator With the Father.—The Trisagion	99
--	----

CHAPTER 9.

<i>The Prayers Before the Mighty Wonder.</i> The Canon.—The Catholic and Apostolic Church.—The Memento of the Living.	116
---	-----

CHAPTER 10.

<i>The Mighty Wonder.</i> Communion With the Saints.—Ardent Supplication.—The Consecration and Elevation.	122
---	-----

CHAPTER 11.

<i>Behold the Bread of Angels!</i> The Eucharistic Garb.—The Glories of Holy Mass.—“Do This for a Commemoration of Me.”—The Lowly Victim of Sacrifice.—The Time to Offer Jesus to His Father.—Love and Sin Meet.—The Altar and Mount Calvary.	135
---	-----

CHAPTER 12.

<i>The Greatness of Our Offering.</i> The Prayer: “Wherefore, O Lord.”—The Host Is Jesus.—The Father Appeased.—Continually Present.—The Greatness of His Power.—Figure and Reality	152
--	-----

CHAPTER 13.

<i>A Stainless Victim.</i> The Prayer: “Vouchsafe to Look.”—Three Remarkable Personages.	167
--	-----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14.

- Every Heavenly Blessing.* The Prayer: "We Humbly Beseech Thee."—The Power of Prayer in Holy Mass.—As Many As Shall Receive. . . 176

CHAPTER 15.

- On the Threshold of the Abode of Pain and the Kingdom of Happiness.* Purgatory and Heaven.—The Prayer: "Be Mindful, Also, O Lord."—The Church's Petition.—The Prayer: "To Us Sinners Also." 182

CHAPTER 16.

- The Worth of Our Offering.* The End of the Canon.—The Summary of a Christian Life.—"Through Him."—"With Him."—"In Him." . . 191

CHAPTER 17.

- The Lord's Prayer.* The Our Father.—The Apostles.—The Martyrs.—The Early Christians.—The Saints.—Our Catholic People. . . 198

CHAPTER 18.

- Made the Food of Earthly Pilgrims.* The Prayer: "Deliver Us, We Beseech Thee."—The Breaking of the Host.—The Agnus Dei.—The Three Communion Prayers.—The Priest's Communion.—The Ablution Prayers. 207

CHAPTER 19.

- Ite, Missa Est.* Ite, Missa Est.—The Gospel of St. John.—Deo Gratias.—Ended, Yet Ever Going On.—The Priest's Blessing.—From the Rising to the Setting of the Sun. 220

-
- Appendix.* Brief Instruction about the Altar, the Sacred Vestments and Vessels Used at Holy Mass. 229

INTRODUCTION

ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

WHO made man? God made man. We were created by God; and natural reason therefore tells us that there should be some manner or rite whereby we can fittingly acknowledge our dependence on God for all that we are and all that we have. Man sinned against God, and was redeemed by the Son of God made man; and again reason tells us there should be some rite fittingly expressive, not only of adoration and petition, but also of propitiation and thanksgiving.

Now, there is such a rite. It is called sacrifice. A sacrifice is the external offering of a sensible gift, which is destroyed or at least submitted to an appropriate transformation, by an authorized minister, in recognition of God's supreme dominion and in order to appease His anger. In simpler words, a sacrifice is the offering of an object by a priest to God, and the consuming of it to acknowledge that He is the Creator and Lord of all things. Such is a sacrifice in the strict sense of the word. *An object*, some thing that is perceived by our senses; *offered to God alone*; *by an authorized priest* who represents the people; and the *consuming, destroying, or transforming or altering* of the offering. When we speak of making little sacrifices, for instance, we use the word sacrifice in a figurative sense, as a thing that partakes more or less, in an imperfect manner, of the character of a real sacrifice.

God has always demanded sacrifices from man after the fall of Adam and Eve, as we can see from the

sacrifices of Cain, Abel, Melchisedech, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the whole sacrificial cult of the Jewish people. These sacrifices were many and various and were offered at different times and occasions, some every day, others on particular days or feasts. There were immolations of victims, such as heifers, oxen, sheep, goats, and lambs, and libations and unbloody offerings of fruits, oils, wines, bread, etc. There were especially the holocaust, in which the victim was killed and wholly burnt to smoke and ashes, peace offerings, thanks offerings, the impetratory sacrifice, and the propitiatory sacrifice.

Suppose you were asked deliberately to destroy something that you value highly, in order to show God that you acknowledge Him Lord and Master. That will give you an idea of sacrifice. Such an offering made to God gives Him adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, supplication. But the greater the gift thus given the greater the adoration; hence, the greatest sacrifice would be the sacrifice of one's own life. That is each man's most precious possession. But God never permitted men to offer human life—not even Abraham. He let them use other creatures, lambs, for instance. Thus they by their sacrifices were able to say to God, "I deserve to die and be consumed even as this lamb is killed and burnt up before Thee, O God, to show that Thou art the Master of life and death." The sacrifices of the Old Law were imperfect; they were but a sign and acknowledgment of guilt unatoned; they were figures of the one Sacrifice of the New Law that was to come, in which the human life of a Divine Person was to attain fully all the ends of sacrifice, by being sacrificed in a bloody manner and then continuing that sacrifice in an unbloody manner, thus fulfilling the

figures of both the bloody and the unbloody sacrifices. Of this Sacrifice Malachias, the last of the prophets, wrote: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand; for from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Mal. 1:10, 11.)

Yes; God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man, in the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, out of love for us. He assumed human nature and as Head and Representative and great High Priest of the human race He suffered and died for us upon the cross. His death upon the cross was a true Sacrifice, the one true Sacrifice. "He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter." (Is. 53: 7.) "Christ also loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us." In this the one perfect Sacrifice we have (1) a priest fully authorized, Christ Himself; (2) a sensible Victim, the sacred humanity of Christ, but a Victim of infinite value, because He is also God; (3) a Sacrifice offered by the High Priest of Himself as Man-God to the Triune God; and (4) the destruction (He permitting the cruel executioners to act as instruments, so to speak) of His human life in order to acknowledge the entire subjection of the human race, of which He was the Representative, to God. Thus utterly appeased by infinite satisfaction made for sin, God threw open the gates of heaven, so that if we co-operate with the graces of the redemption we may enter in.

Thus imperfect sacrifices culminated in the one perfect Sacrifice of the Cross. Thus the Savior, Head and Representative, gave His life as an all-availing Sacrifice.

He gives it still. That Sacrifice is continuing "from the rising of the sun even to the going down" and will so continue to the end of time. *Holy Mass!* It is the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross, its unbloody renewal, its re-presentation, its continuation. That is why it is the Mass that matters, the Mass, the unbloody Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, the very heart and center of the Catholic religion.

That the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, we know from the infallible teaching of the Church and from Holy Scripture and tradition. It is the same Sacrifice because the Offering and the Priest are the same, Christ the Savior; and because the ends for which the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered, namely, adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction, and supplication, are the same as those of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The Mass is not merely a representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, as a drama represents some past event. It is not a mere spiritual Sacrifice: it is the reality renewed. The Council of Trent teaches that it is not only a commemoration of what Christ did at the Last Supper, but the same Sacrifice as that of the cross. The Last Supper was not, strictly speaking, the first Mass. That was not a Sacrifice completed, but a Sacrifice begun and completed the next day by the death upon the cross. The first Mass was the voluntary death of Christ upon the cross.

For a clear and logical explanation of this we may refer to Bishop MacDonald's "The Mass Explained," a splendid book that gives the gleanings of thirty years' thought and study and prayer on the part of the learned author.

The foundation thought of this book would seem to be that the Sacrifice of Redemption, as imaging the Holy Trinity, is three in one and one in three; that the three

stages that go to make it up are one in essence (pp. 13, 14).

In the first stage, that of the Last Supper, our Lord offers up to the Father His Body and Blood, telling the Apostles they must "do this" after Him.

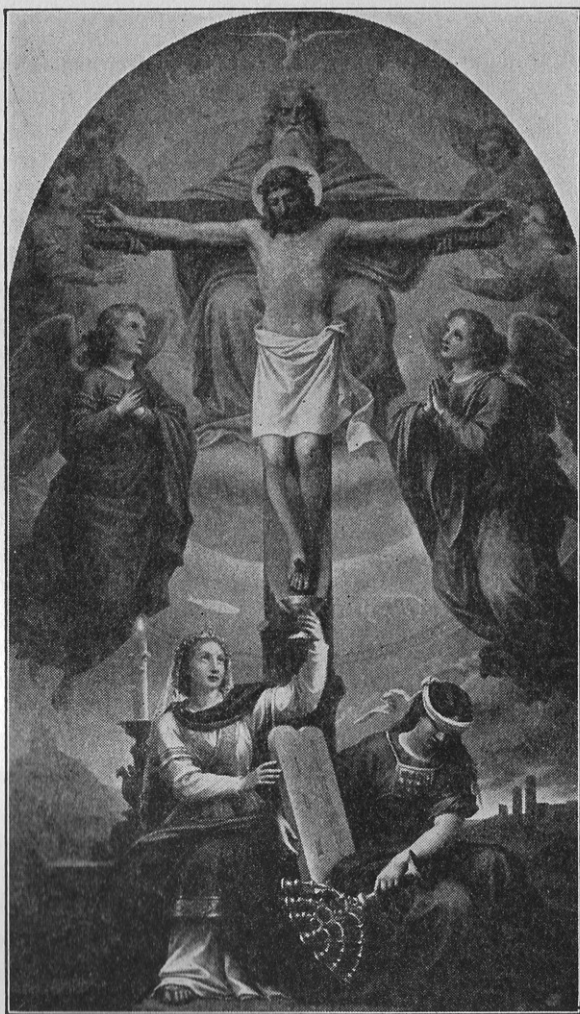
The second stage is the Cross, where our Lord actually sheds the Blood which He offered in the Last Supper.

And the Sacrifice begun in the Last Supper, consummated on Calvary, is operative in the Mass, for in the re-presenting of Christ's death to the Father we get its merits applied to our souls. The Sacrifice of Calvary "receives its final perfection and completion in the Mass, which binds Supper and Cross in one liturgical whole" (pp. 24, 26, 27); so that, in Cardinal Manning's words: "The Mass is not only the shadow of Calvary, but also the reality."

To illustrate how Supper, Cross and Mass are one, the author draws the following parallel: "The Blood of Christ is the seed, which broke into bud in the Supper, turned to purple blossom in the Passion, is rounded into ripe fruit in the Mass" (p. 25). He then points out how these three "stages" are typified in the sacrifice for sin of the Ancient Law, which prefigured the Sacrifice of Calvary.

Again, in the Dogmatic Theology of Pohle-Preuss, we find the following:

"It is an article of faith that the Mass, though a true sacrifice, is intrinsically and essentially a representation and commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The Council of Trent defines: ' . . . our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once on the altar unto God the Father, . . . that He might leave to His own beloved Spouse, the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody



THE SACRIFICE ON CALVARY

“And therefore He is the Mediator of the New Testament: that by means of His death for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” (Heb. 9: 15.)

sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the Cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit, . . . offered up to God the Father His own Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine.' ”

The very expressions which Holy Scripture employs to show the sacrificial character of the Last Supper (“*corpus traditum pro vobis*,” “*sanguis effusus pro multis*” —“the body delivered for you,” “the blood shed for many,”) point to an intrinsic relation between the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross, for it was only in the latter Sacrifice that the “giving of the Body” and the “shedding of the Blood” were physically realized. The Vulgate, in translating the Greek text by “*Corpus quod pro vobis tradetur*”—“(my) body which shall be delivered for you,” and “*sanguis qui pro multis effundetur*,”—“(my) blood . . . which shall be shed for many,” brings out this intrinsic relation by using the future tense. After the consummation of the Sacrifice of the Cross this relation, which had up to then been anticipatory, became retrospective.

St. Paul places Christ’s command, “Do this for a commemoration of me,” into direct relation with His death on the Cross, when he says: “ . . . You shall show the death of the Lord, until He come.”

But can the Mass be a Sacrifice, since Christ can die no more? It is not necessary that the offering be destroyed. It is sufficient that a change takes place. By the words of consecration pronounced separately over the bread and wine, the Savior is placed upon the altar under the figure of death, is mystically slain by “the sword of the words of consecration;” for Christ’s Body is symbolically separated from His Blood under the

separate species of bread and wine; and, although the whole Christ is contained beneath each species, it is under this figure of death and this representation of His expiration on the Cross that He offers Himself to His eternal Father and pleads our cause, thus ceaselessly and the world over "showing forth the death of Christ until He come." (1 Cor. 11:26.) Communion, therefore, though an integral part, is not an essential part of the Mass; for in the separate consecration we find all that is required for a true sacrifice. But, surely Communion intensifies the state of humiliation and mystical death of the sacred Victim. So we may say that the Sacrifice is consummated through consecration, but perfected and completed by Communion.

Of course, there is some difference between the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross—an accidental, not essential, difference. As anyone can see, the manner of offering is different. On the cross Christ really shed His Blood and was really slain; in the Mass there is no real shedding of Blood nor real death, because Christ can die no more; and there are other differences; but, as we have said, the Sacrifice of the Mass, through the separate consecration of the bread and wine, re-presents His death on the cross. No; we do not fully understand; for we are face to face with a great mystery here, a sublime mystery of faith—*Mysterium fidei*, as the priest whispers at the consecration.

There are many ways of hearing Mass well; for that we now naturally wish to do. The best of all ways is joining the Savior Himself in all the sentiments that prompted Him to renew the Sacrifice of the cross upon our altars, and to go to Holy Communion, which partaking of the sacrificial banquet is the most perfect manner of identifying ourselves with the priest at the

altar, Christ's visible representative and the secondary offerer, and through him with Christ, the High Priest, Principal Offerer, and Victim.

The unbloody sacrifice by no means derogates from the bloody Sacrifice. Indeed, the Mass assures to the Sacrifice of Calvary its full efficacy; it is the cross put within reach of souls in every country and through all ages. As the Secret prayer of the ninth Sunday after Pentecost tells us, "as often as the memory of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is wrought." And St. John Chrysostom adds that "the celebration of Mass avails as much as the death of Jesus on the Cross," in the sense that it applies to us the graces that Christ merited for us by His death. It is as if we ourselves were present at the foot of the cross.

CHAPTER 1

THE ENDS OF SACRIFICE

IT IS quite clear that nothing can be wanting in the beatitude of Almighty God. Were anything at all wanting He would cease to be God; for in God are all perfections.

But nevertheless when time began to be God called into being the marvelous creation that we see round about us and the invisible spirit world that we do not see. Now millions upon millions of angels surround Him in Paradise. In the limitless spaces of the heavens a mighty host of suns and stars are drawn up in orderly array forming, so to speak, a triumphal way for their Creator. And on earth the three great kingdoms of nature (the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the mineral kingdom), over which the Creator has placed man as creation's king, proclaim that same Creator's wisdom and power.

Creation! It is a realm of staggering immensity wherein the searching gaze of man everywhere detects manifestations of divine omnipotence. Learned men without number have at all times delved deep into the pages of this wondrous book of creation; they grew old and gray in the course of their researches into the mysteries of nature; and, despite their endeavors, how little they eventually understood thereof. New discoveries were constantly made; new branches of learning were developed; new marvels of the Creator's wisdom were proclaimed. And true science reverently exclaims with ever increasing admiration, "How great the Creator,

and how insignificant we!" Real, genuine learning goes to the bottom of things, it seeks the source of these marvelous works. And its seeking infallibly leads to the throne of God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

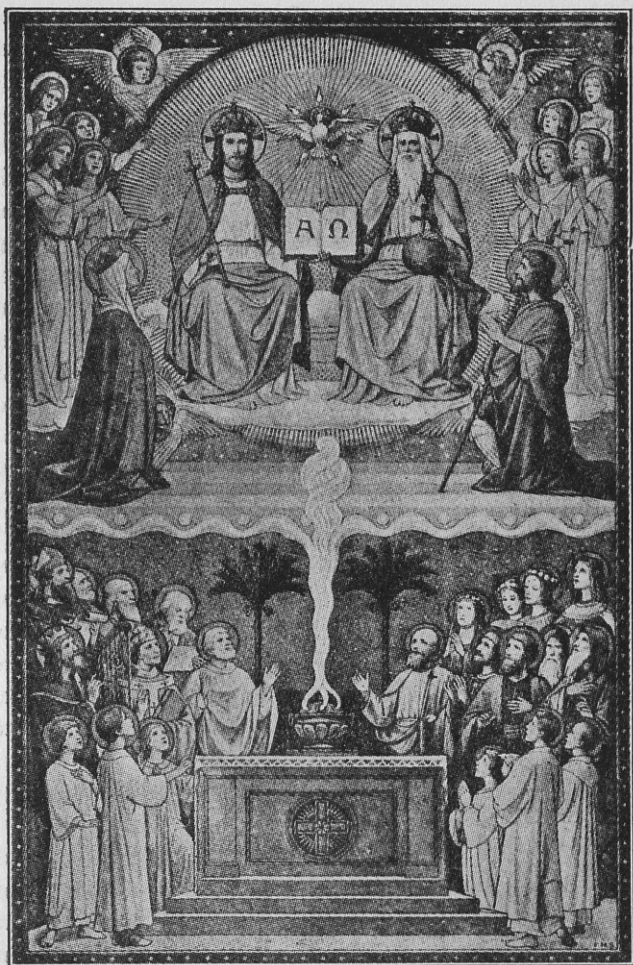
Instinctively we here pause and ask ourselves: Why did this God, to Whom nothing can be wanting, create all these things, call all these creatures into being? Reason and faith give answer: God has done so purely out of love and goodness, out of divine generosity; not for Himself alone did He wish to keep His happiness and bliss; also other beings were to partake in the riches of His glory. That is why God called creation into being.

Divine Providence has, as just mentioned, given us two shining lights, to enable us as rational beings to cast a glance into the realm of divine perfections, if only we use them properly and do not close our eyes to the truth; He has given us the natural light of reason and the supernatural light of faith. Both lights show us the Creator; both enable us to know the majesty of the Almighty, the First Cause of all things; both just naturally force us to our knee before the Creator, the Lord and Master of the universe.

Adoration

God is the Creator; the creature, man, is His handiwork, His property and possession. It is man's duty to look upon the Creator as his supreme Lord and Master; to fall prostrate before Him in reverence and admiration; to adore and praise Him. This truth can not be denied.

If God be not the Creator, then tell me, how does the world happen to be here? How do you yourself



ADORATION

“All the nations Thou hast made, shall come and adore before Thee, O Lord: and they shall glorify Thy name.”
(Ps. 85: 9.)

happen to be here? But if He is the Creator, then He has an absolute right to your *adoration*.

What an honor it truly is to adore the Godhead, to render it homage—what a distinction for a poor creature! To acknowledge in God all the good, all the true, all the loveliness that is and can be; to submit one's understanding and will before the greatness of God; to offer Him body and soul and even to wish to be consumed for love of Him and in order to procure for Him honor and glory: is it possible to imagine a life work greater than that for mortal man?

Thanksgiving

Not only did God call creation into being; He likewise continually preserves it. This constant preservation of creation is no less a marvel than creation itself. Were the Creator for only an instant to withdraw His preserving hand from the work of creation, the universe would forthwith fall back into its original nothingness. And as the universe, so also every single creature; all would straightway be annihilated, all would cease to be.

It follows, then, that there is not a moment in which God does not think of you, His creature, that He daily cares for you and preserves your life with infinite love. For you He has kept prepared only that which is good and choice and beautiful. You see, He did not want to keep His happiness for Himself; no—you were to share it with Him. Your earthly life was to be a life in paradise, all God's creation placed at your feet; and if now you find that thorns and thistles abound, it is not God's fault. Sin, sin committed by man through his own free will, has spoiled everything. To the evil of original sin and to the actual sins of men alone must you ascribe

the sad fact that you suffer and that life here below is full of tribulations.

But in the midst of all this misery God in His unspeakable goodness and mercy has caused a source of merit and future happiness to arise for our benefit through His Son. Through His cross Jesus has ennobled and sanctified suffering. Unless we would be ingrates, we must ever be thankful for this divine care of us, this preservation of our lives, this showering of innumerable benefits upon us.

God has a strict right to *thanksgiving* on the part of His creatures. And that gratitude ought unceasingly to go out to Him from the hearts of men; for the providence of God is without limits, the love of God is active for us with an activity that knows no pause. Even as each moment of life is an additional blessing from God so, too, must each moment be an act of thanksgiving to this all bountiful Creator. Benefits postulate gratitude.

Oh, if only men had at least the spiritual perception and the good will to think of their Creator once in a while during the day, to give a grateful thought to their greatest Benefactor! Then would their lives be an uninterrupted song of thanksgiving. But, alas! How different it is in reality!

Reparation

Instead of adoring and thanking his Lord and Master, his Creator, his God, man offends Him. Impudent and shameless, he hurls into His face the offense of sin. Sins every day! Sins in every age of life! Sins without interruption! Can it be possible? Does the helpless little creature dare offend the almighty Creator? Alas—yes!

And the result? Sin, this utter contempt of God, this

open rebellion against Him, gives the Creator a right to call the creature to account and to punish him—and to forgive him only if he repents, does penance, and makes due *reparation*.

Human nature knows full well God's right to reparation; man feels his duty to make good the wrong done. Even among pagan religions, no matter how idolatrous and unreasonable they may be, we find the urge, the necessity, of offering sacrifices of reparation to the offended deity.

God is infinitely good, but also infinitely just; He will not renounce His right of demanding reparation from the sinner. Indeed, God can not permit that a pitiable creature spurn His commands and violate His precepts without more ado. Divine majesty and sanctity can not tolerate that. Not to punish the sinner, not to punish sin, were equivalent to disregarding sin, were indirectly to approve of sin, thus utterly discouraging the good. Is he a good father who does not punish and seek to amend the child that abandons himself to vice? Does such a father do his duty? No!

There are many people, I know, who do not care to understand this. And yet God must punish sin. He can not renounce this right.

From this it necessarily follows that sinful man—and we are all sinners—must make atonement, unless he wishes to live and die as an enemy of God.

Petition

God gives to man the life of the body; and in holy Baptism He gives to him the far more precious supernatural life of grace. Now, since even this earthly life can not for a moment endure without divine conservation, still less can the life of grace be preserved in us

without divine assistance. If the infinite goodness of God did not ceaselessly strew the path of man with blessings, how could he ever attain to the bliss of heaven? What is man without the grace of God?

It is man's duty to strive as best he can to preserve his earthly life; but still more is it his duty to preserve his supernatural life, else he can not be said to be a child of God, else he can not reach his last end. A pilgrim of earth to be pitied were he, if through his own fault he should fail to attain to his final end, God and His heaven.

But we may not forget that grace is wholly a gift of God, His free gift. And yet God ardently desires to enrich us beyond measure with His grace. Still He wants us to ask for it. Hence the necessity of *petition*, of prayer.

Yes; God has indeed created and redeemed us without our asking Him to do so; but He will not make us eternally happy without our co-operation. We must merit His heaven. He demands that we labor and strive for Him, so that at the end of our days He may find in us something that He can reward. At the same time He would make us happy here below by giving us a right to merit His reward; hence He demands our co-operation with His grace, our participation through good works.

This co-operation should be willingly given; God does not want forced service. Were God to do everything, were we to do nothing for our eternal salvation, where would our merit be and where our claim to reward? Or were God to force us, how could we be said to be free in our actions? As it is, He lets man have His choice: he may choose the good or he may choose the evil. And it is because of this choice that we see upon earth those that are good and those that are evil.

If we choose the good and do it, we heap up for ourselves treasures in heaven. But mark it well: of ourselves we are unable to choose the good or to do it; for that we need the help of God. "Without Me," says the Savior, "you can do nothing." For this divine assistance, for this grace of God we must pray. We must petition God for it.

If our prayer is to be well received at the throne of God and given favorable answer, it must possess a value that is commensurate to the Almighty, to Whom it is directed, and to the grace for which it pleads. The Creator demands of the creature that he look upon Him as the embodiment of all that is good, as the primal source of grace, and that his humble petition for grace be wholly worthy of the divine majesty.

Who would dare even for an instant to question God's right to a worthy prayer?

Right and duty are two mutually related concepts. Where there are rights, there necessarily must also be duties. God has the indisputable rights that we have just mentioned; and hence, without doubt, man also has corresponding duties.

To be brief, God is the embodiment of all perfection, of all being. Hence, man above all owes to God, the Supreme Being, *adoration*.

God is the source and the cause of all good. He has given to man all that he is and all that he has. Man must accordingly *thank* God as his greatest Benefactor.

God is offended by sin. The sinner, therefore, must ask Him for forgiveness and *atone* for his sins.

God has decreed that His special grace shall be given only to those who ask Him for it. So man must *pray* that he may receive this grace and that he may live in grace.

From these four rights of God as regards His creatures arise four duties of man to His Creator.

Man's Inability

Do you, mortal man, fulfill these duties? Indeed, could you possibly fulfill them so worthily as to be a cause of complacency to God? To this there is but one answer. No! No, you poor creature, you can not. Through sin you have become so poor and helpless that not even with the best intentions in the world, not even were you to exert yourself to the utmost of your power, could you of yourself regain the friendship of God. Your adoration will never correspond to the infinite majesty of God; your thanksgiving will never be equivalent to the benefit you have received; your reparation will never make good the disregard and contempt that you have shown the Most High; and your prayer, your half-hearted, distracted prayer, will of itself never reach the throne of God, will never merit an answer. Between the almighty, thrice holy, eternal God and His sinful creature there yawns a mighty gulf, abysmal in depth, limitless in width.

O man, what are you to do, since you can not of yourself fulfill these four great duties that bind you to God? Poor creature, what are you going to do? Are you going to accustom yourself to the awful thought of eternal separation from your Creator? Is it really true that between heaven and earth a gulf has opened so wide that it can not be bridged over? Have all relations between the Creator and the creature been broken? Is God going to withdraw Himself into the eternal depths of His heaven and there, undisturbed by the ingratitude and safe from the rebellion of man, enjoy His own infinite happiness, leaving man to himself and

to his bitter fate, and calmly looking on while he plunges into an abyss of unutterable misery?

But Holy Mass Unites Heaven and Earth

But let us look around a little in these wild, depressing wastes of exile wherein man, unable to do his bounden duties, is separated from the eternal God with His inalienable rights.

There before our eyes arises—an altar!

A man approaches it. Upon his soul is stamped a supernatural and ineffaceable mark. In his hands we see a chalice and a little piece of bread. From his lips fall a few all-powerful words; reverently he pronounces them over this bread and over this chalice; and—O wonder of wonders!—heaven and earth are forthwith moved. Heaven opens and Jesus comes down upon the altar of sacrifice. The earth awakens; exiled mankind shakes off the fetters of helplessness and draws nearer and nearer; it gathers round the altar; and out of millions and millions of hearts arises humble, grateful supplication. We hear songs of praise—and piteous pleading. And from on high? Ah, from the heights of heaven resound melodies rich in promises of love and pardon, of blessing and of joy! Heavenly spirits are there proclaiming glory to God and peace to men of good will.

But what has happened? Why this rejoicing? Why this hope? Here on this altar mankind offers to the Eternal Father the immaculate, unspotted Lamb of God! Through this Sacrifice it fully acknowledges and satisfies the rights of God; and the Eternal Father accepts the homage of His Son and of the human race.

It is the *Sacrifice of the Mass*.

The endless desert that separates God from man, and heaven from earth, could not be crossed, were there

not in its midst the hill of Calvary, that saving oasis where God and man meet in the embrace of friendship.

Through His sacrificial death on Calvary the Savior blotted out the guilt of all men. From that moment on, mankind has been in a position to offer its Creator *adoration* worthy of Him, the *thanksgiving* that is His due, all-sufficing *reparation*, and all-availing *petition*.

And this Sacrifice of the Cross is constantly renewed and offered to God in the Sacrifice of the Mass; for in every Holy Mass Christ offers Himself to the Eternal Father in an unbloody manner for the sins of the world.

And thus it is that Holy Mass is the golden chain that ever unites God and man. It is the wondrous bridge that spans the mighty abyss between Creator and creature and brings to an end the fearful separations between them.

Thanks to the Mass and through the Mass, incense, prayers, and tears reach the throne of God, and divine love and divine grace and heavenly blessings rain down upon us from heaven above.

Oh, what a treasure thou art to us and what happiness thou bringest us, thou blessed, adorable, thrice holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

No, my God, I will not separate myself from Thine altar. Thou shalt see me near to Thee in the morning hour. In Holy Mass will I adore Thee, thank Thee, beg Thy forgiveness, and ask of Thee all the graces and blessings of which I stand in need. Perhaps now and again Thou wilt discover tears in my eyes—tears of thanks for the great things Thou hast done for me—and tears of joy that mine is the inestimable privilege of being permitted daily to offer to Thee Jesus, the Savior of the world, Thy beloved Son, in Whom Thou art well pleased.

CHAPTER 2

THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS CREDENTIALS

ALL the preparations have been made. The altar is ready; and kneeling before it in profound recollection a congregation of devout souls. Solemn silence reigns in the house of God. The candles are burning; but their mellow light scarcely disturbs the soft shadows of the vanishing night. A faint odor of fragrant incense pervades the place. Everything is so quiet that one seems almost to hear the beating of loyal hearts attuned to God—nay, even the mysterious voice of God Himself. One might easily imagine oneself in the catacombs.

The Priest Approaches the Altar

But suddenly the silence is broken by the silvery peal of a little bell. A man in strange and extraordinary garb appears, serious of bearing. Slowly and solemnly he approaches the altar. He ascends the altar steps. Upon the altar table he places the chalice that he carries in his hands. He opens the book. Then he comes down the altar steps and begins the highest and holiest of all rites.

The Character of the Priest

Who is this man?

Who is he! Perhaps he came from a royal palace—or from behind a plow—or from the noise and bustle of a factory. His cradle may have stood in some miserable hut who knows where, or in some despised and hidden little town, or in the luxurious nursery of some

palatial residence. But it matters not. All that is of no consequence here and does not in the least change the nature and the sublimity of his mission.

Not from men has he received that which distinguishes him with so eminent a dignity. No; God Himself has imprinted a mysterious, indelible mark upon his soul,—one that exalts him above the mightiest of this earth. From heaven itself he has received a special commission and vast powers; and that is why the hearts and homes of God's people are everywhere thrown open to him, that is why he is to the faithful the ambassador of Christ, empowered to ascend the altar of God.

The Ambassador of Christ

He is an ambassador. Even now from the pulpit he has announced to the faithful the message from heaven. He has spoken to them of serious obligations, of immortal hopes, of eternal punishment and eternal reward. Now he returns to the altar. He opens the little door, takes the Savior into his hands, shows Him to the kneeling people, and gives Him to the souls that believe in Him, that yearn for Him, seek Him, love Him, and desire to live through Him.

When heaven would communicate to us commands, promises, threats, and gifts, it employs therefor not an angel, but the priest. Everything must pass through the hands of this extraordinary man. And woe to him who despises his office and his mission, who persecutes him, offers him insult! Woe to such a one! For he despises God Himself, offers insult to God Himself, persecutes God Himself! Jesus has solemnly so declared. But happy the Christian who holds the priest in high honor. Happy the family that receives him. Happy the home that is for him another Bethany; for the Savior

has likewise declared, "Amen, Amen I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me . . ." And wheresoever the Savior is, there rests His blessing, too.

The priest is the ambassador of God to men; and at the same time he is the ambassador of men to God.



THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . ." (Matthew 28: 19.)

"He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me . . ." (John 13: 20.)

The adoration and homage of men, their prayers, their reparation, their thanks, and all the noble emotions and devout aspirations of their hearts he offers up to God in union with Jesus Christ; and God accepts them all with the utmost complacency.

In our name and for our salvation does the priest offer to the Eternal Father His only-begotten Son Jesus. He offers Him the unutterable merits of His life upon

earth and particularly of His sacrificial death upon the cross.

Could your office, O ambassador of Christ, be loftier and greater than it really is? When you stand at the altar there, tell me, which of the angels of God can compare with you in greatness and in dignity? To which of the cherubim has such task ever been assigned? Your power surpasses every other power, be it among men or be it among the angels of heaven! Soon you will breathe a few hallowed words; and the almighty, eternal God will obey you! He hears your summons and comes down from highest heaven. He comes into your hands and remains upon the altar as long as you desire!

You transact with God regarding the most weighty affairs of human life and the momentous concerns of immortal souls. It is your word that seals and eternally ratifies the treaty of peace that is daily made between heaven and earth.

O priest of God, perhaps on the street just now you were an object of derision to some miserable few who know not what they do—*nesciunt quid faciunt*. Perhaps you were ridiculed, mocked. Perhaps there are those who at this very moment would gladly drag your sacred robes in the dirt and heap shame upon your head. But this spirit of unbelief has no power over you. Neither opposition nor attack, neither mockery nor derision can in the least lessen your dignity or diminish your power.

Ye godless of all times, persecute if you will the priest of Jesus Christ, heap upon him your bitter hate, your fierce contempt, your vile calumnies. There will always be One Who will take him under His powerful protection and repose in him all confidence: the almighty, all-

knowing God in heaven above. Know, that this unassuming, weak, and mortal man, the object of your ridicule, unable even to save himself from your poisoned shafts, will ever have the power to cause heaven to open and to bring down upon earth Jesus Christ, your all-just and sternest Judge.

The priest, this man entrusted with a twofold ambassadorship, now stands at the foot of the altar, about to begin the Adorable Sacrifice.

With justice might one of the faithful who wishes to assist at the Sacrifice ask him: "Tell me, in whose name do you stand there and who has sent you? You claim here to be able to offer to the eternal God my adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition in union with the adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition of Jesus. 'Tis well! But who has given you this commission and this plenitude of power?"

A serious, startling question this, and one of momentous import; for it depends upon the answer whether the Mass is the most exalted and the most holy of all actions, or whether it must be called the most miserable and most sacrilegious of all deceptions.

He Shows His Credentials

But the priest, the ambassador of Christ, forthwith shows his credentials to the assembled people. He convinces them of the lawfulness of the office that he is about to exercise. Solemnly he utters the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is as though he would say, "When I stand here, when I ascend the altar steps, I do it in the name and at the bidding and in the power of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Surely, in the sacred functions of Catholic liturgy

there can hardly be found a moment when these words, so simple yet so exalted, are as suggestive of majesty and sublimity as here at the foot of the altar at the beginning of the Mass. We can hardly think of a more solemn vindication of his ambassadorship.



THE DIVINE MEDIATOR

“For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave Himself a redemption for all . . .” (I. Tim. 2: 5, 6.)

To act as mediator between heaven and earth and that not in one's own right, but with the authority of Him Who holds the universe as a ball in His hands—Who guides the destinies of all creatures according to His will; to step forward at the behest of Him Who looks

upon all the greatness and glory of this world as dust and ashes and treats it accordingly—Whose justice plays with the crowns of kings and treads underfoot their kingdoms: what greatness is not this and what power! Who among men is greater than this? Was there ever a ruler, will ever a monarch sit upon a throne, who can boast of the splendor of a similar dignity, even though he manifest to the people all his grandeur and his majesty? O priest of Jesus Christ, that honor is yours alone. That dignity and power is yours alone, O anointed of the Lord!

Yes; it can happen and has happened only too often that the kings and powerful ones of this world have unexpectedly had the scepter snatched from their hands and their purple robes mercilessly torn from their shoulders, and, bewildered by cries for revenge uttered by their sycophants of a moment ago, have found themselves suddenly without throne or crown or protection and on the weary road to exile. But you, O priest of God, you are a priest forever! And your God—of that you may be certain—will never take your scepter from you, will never deprive you of your office.

All earth may be reduced to a mighty heap of rubbish; all earthly greatness and glory may crumble into dust; naught but shards and splinters may remain to remind one of human pride: but as long as a stone remains here below, an altar stone, so long, O priest of God, can you go forward and upward, rising above all the ruins around you, above all the honors and glories of the world. Supreme in your office of mediator between God and man, you may announce to all the world, "I stand here in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!"

And should it happen—O blindest blindness, O height

of perversity!—should it happen that also you become a traitor to your exalted office and sublime vocation and a shameless deceiver of the faithful, you nevertheless possess the mighty power of still commanding the almighty God, of calling Him down from highest heaven into the chalice and—O horrible deed!—into your sacrilegious hands!

Of all the ambassadors that speak and act in the name of a ruler, you alone, O Catholic priest, can to your last breath and with full authority speak to God in the name of men and speak to men in the name of God.

But who ever thinks of such a world of wonders when he meets the priest upon the street or sees him at the foot of the altar beginning the Adorable Sacrifice? And who thinks of the deep signification of that sign of the cross and its few simple words, with which he begins the great mystery of Holy Mass?

The Opening Prayer

At the foot of the altar the priest recites the 42nd psalm (which is omitted in Masses for the Dead and in the ferial Masses of Passiontide), “Judge me, O God, etc.,” and immediately adds the *Confiteor*. Therein are expressed the sentiments which ought to animate both priest and people at this sacred time.

The priest, this man misknown by almost everybody, despised by many, honored by only a few, but chosen by God from among thousands, continues with the sacred rite. He has handed over his credentials. Now he seizes the harp of David and sings his petitions unto God, inasmuch as he recites the psalm, *Judica me*. He prays that the Almighty may save him from wicked and deceitful men—may make smooth and easy for him the way unto the mountain of God. Upon the harp of the Royal Psalmist he sings unto God the promise to announce

His praise among men. Unto the Eternal he confides the trouble and the pain that engulf his soul; but also the hopes that surge within his breast, as often as he thinks of his unworthiness and of the infinite mercy of his Redeemer.

And then he proclaims that he will place all his trust in the name of the Lord and in His help. Indeed, in Whom else should he trust, in view of the supereminent dignity to which he has been called? Upon what can he fasten on earth? wherein seek support?

At the same moment a sense of his own utter unworthiness quite overcomes him. He thinks of his past sins. And oppressed by the consciousness of his guilt he bends low before all the people, humbles himself in the presence of all, and strikes his breast in acknowledgment of sin: "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault!" Listen! He is saying the *Confiteor*.

CHAPTER 3

SIN AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

MAN, if truly convinced of the omnipotence of God, cannot but acknowledge himself to be what he in reality is; for this persuasion leaves no room for self-deception. And it may be said in all truth that there is no place on earth where man more sensibly feels the presence of God than in the house of God itself; and most of all does that presence make itself felt when one is nearest to the tabernacle, at the very foot of the altar. It is above all there, that he who has sinned, instinctively acknowledges himself a sinner.

The Mass has already begun. The *Confiteor* is being said. A sense of guilt oppresses both the priest and the people. Both in turn confess, in the presence of Almighty God, of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, of the angels and the saints that they have sinned—and sinned, not merely through frailty, but through their own fault, through their own most grievous fault.

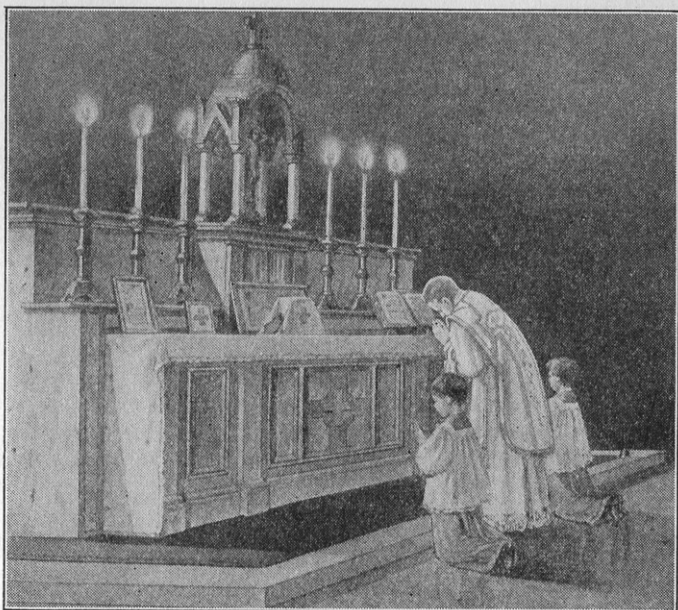
The Confiteor

“I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed: through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, brethren, to pray to the Lord our God for me.”

An almost unnoticeable ceremony this, and very brief.

But yet how full of beauty! How sublime and how abounding in salutary instruction!

The priest is about to ascend the altar of sacrifice.



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THE CONFITEOR

“O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke, 18: 13.)

With heart and soul and with mind intent the faithful are about to accompany him and in union with him, offer to the Almighty the Adorable Oblation. What a solemn moment! But in the presence of the all-holy, all-knowing God both are weighed down by the consciousness of their guilt. Hence their public plea for grace and for pardon.

To ask God's forgiveness and to receive it, is the first step towards a renewal of life. It is, so to say, a rebirth, giving new blood and new strength, enabling the Christian to advance courageously along the path that leads to Golgotha, to follow the way of the cross that leads to heaven. And, the soul having been purified still more, the hand will tremble less when, at the holy oblation, it reaches out to take the unspotted Lamb and sacrifice it to the Father.

Therefore it is that at the very beginning of this sublime action the soul must needs cleanse itself in the waters of contrition. How else could it taste in all their sweetness the heavenly mysteries about to be celebrated? How could a soul assist at Mass with a glad heart and devoutly, were its conscience not at peace with God, were that stern monitor to say: "Sinner, what art thou doing here in the presence of the immaculate Lamb of God, slain by thy sins? How darkest thou come into its presence before having pleaded for pardon, before having obtained forgiveness?"

The Lesson the Confiteor Gives

Now we must lay still greater weight on the confession of sins made by priest and people and enter into it somewhat more deeply. The confession of both is spontaneous, sincere, and honorable. At this moment the priest beholds in the faithful around him the guilty ones—sinners. And the faithful see the guilty one, the sinner, in the priest who stands at the foot of the altar. Now, I ask, what is the solemn duty of every Christian when there stands before him a man who has sinned, seriously sinned? Ah, let us take to heart the beautiful lesson that Holy Church here gives us at the beginning of every Mass! Here we learn that it is a

sacred Christian duty to invoke God's mercy upon our fellow sinners. No condemnation, no damnation, no! Grace and mercy rather upon all unhappy offenders and miserable sinners. No sooner does the priest hear that the faithful have confessed their guilt than a prayer for mercy and pardon and peace falls from his lips:



CHRIST APPOINTS
ST. PETER THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

“And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matth. 16: 19.)

Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus, et dimissis peccatis vestris perducatur vos ad vitam aeternam—“May the almighty God have mercy on you, and forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting.” *Amen*.—“So be it!” the people reply.

Neither unusual nor startling are these words on the lips of a priest, and who would even for a moment ques-

tion their sincerity? Everyone knows that it is the sacred office of the priest to make sinners recipients of the mercy of God—to lead back to the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd the lambs that have wandered astray—to bring back the prodigal sons into the arms of their heavenly Father. If the Catholic priest would not make due intercession in order to reconcile the sinner with heaven and to cause the grace of God to descend upon him as a refreshing dew, to what purpose were the priesthood?

On their part, the faithful likewise plead for pardon and mercy for the priest, and that in the selfsame touching words: *Misereatur tui omnipotens Deus*, etc.—“May the almighty God have mercy on you,” etc.

O glorious teaching of true Christian charity! Brotherly love, how exalted thou art! But at the same time how often spurned, and how often sinned against, and how often ruthlessly trodden in the dust!

But thou, O ambassador of Christ, thou wilt be constantly mindful of these words from the prayers said at the foot of the altar, even as that constant remembrance is thy duty in the fulfillment of thy sacred calling, be it at the bedside of the sick, or in thy daily association with the souls God has entrusted to thy care, particularly in the tribunal of penance.

And you, faithful people, you who have so devoutly recited the *Misereatur* at the beginning of the Mass, will also you be ever mindful of these words? Do you utter them from the heart also outside the church, or does the echo of these words already die away at the very entrance of the house of God, to give place to talk that scourges the poor priest and drags his sacred person in the dust? Have you, for instance, a *Misereatur* for him when in your presence others speak of the possible sins

or the known failings of a priest? Do you defend him when devilish, character-killing calumnies raise their serpentine heads and do all in their power to strike priest and Church with the deadly sting of evil suspicion? When you hear that papers bring hateful, disgusting articles against him? When the murderous whisperings of evil tongues hiss in your ears? When evil reports brazenly besmire the fair name of the representative of Christ? Others simply repeat everything, without worrying in the least whether what is thus said about the priest is true or not, but you—what stand do you take in this matter? Does your answer then resemble a *Misereatur* or is it rather like a fierce *Crucifigatur* (“Let him be crucified!”), inasmuch as you join in with the others?

And what happens in families? I will not say in godless families, but in families that still wish to be considered as sterling Catholics and, indeed, very religious—what happens there when by chance the conversation turns upon a priest who unfortunately, being but human, has made a mistake, or who has laid himself open to reproach, or who has not been an honor to his exalted calling? Alas! how roughly the priest is treated even in such a “genuinely Catholic” circle! What harsh judgments are passed upon him! How sadly he is torn to tatters! And that often in the presence of guileless little ones! What is the refrain of such like talk? Is it the soothing music of the *Misereatur* (“May the almighty God have mercy” . . .) or the hellish discord of the blood-curdling *Tolle, tolle crucifigatur!* (“Away with him, away with him, let him be crucified!”)? Alas! is there not a vestige of fraternal charity anywhere? And it is just such Catholics that never have a word of sympathy to spare for the priests; it is just such as these who demand that everywhere and at all times he

manifest the most heroic spirit of self-sacrifice; that he live on fastings and scourgings; that he never indulge in even the most innocent pleasure; that he possess the very highest degree of perfection; in a word, that he be an angel and not a man. It is just those who delight the most in robbing him of his good name, who criticize his every little fault in the family circle—it is just those who themselves need the *Misereatur* more than anyone else! And for their own persons they are the very first to demand it from the lips of the priest. But theirs is not the magnanimity to pronounce it for others—theirs is not even the common politeness to do so!

But early in the morning they shall hear from the lips of the priest whom they so shamefully berated in their talk or whom, without a word of protest, they permitted others to malign—from his lips they shall hear the beautiful lesson of Christian charity that gladly forgives and forgets. *Misereatur vestri . . . Indulgentiam, absolutionem . . .* “May the almighty God have mercy on you,” he will say, “may He grant you pardon, absolution, and remission of your sins.” But they will not understand that sweet lesson of brotherly love. When, O when will the faithful finally understand the far-reaching lesson of these simple words! When will they finally take to heart the wondrous lessons of Holy Mass and make practical application?

The Priest Ascends the Altar

Hands that daily touch the holiest things cannot be pure enough; and souls that God chooses for the exalted dignity of the priesthood cannot be adorned with innocence too great. This the priest well knows. And hence, though he has just begged of God complete forgiveness of all sins, both for himself and for the people.

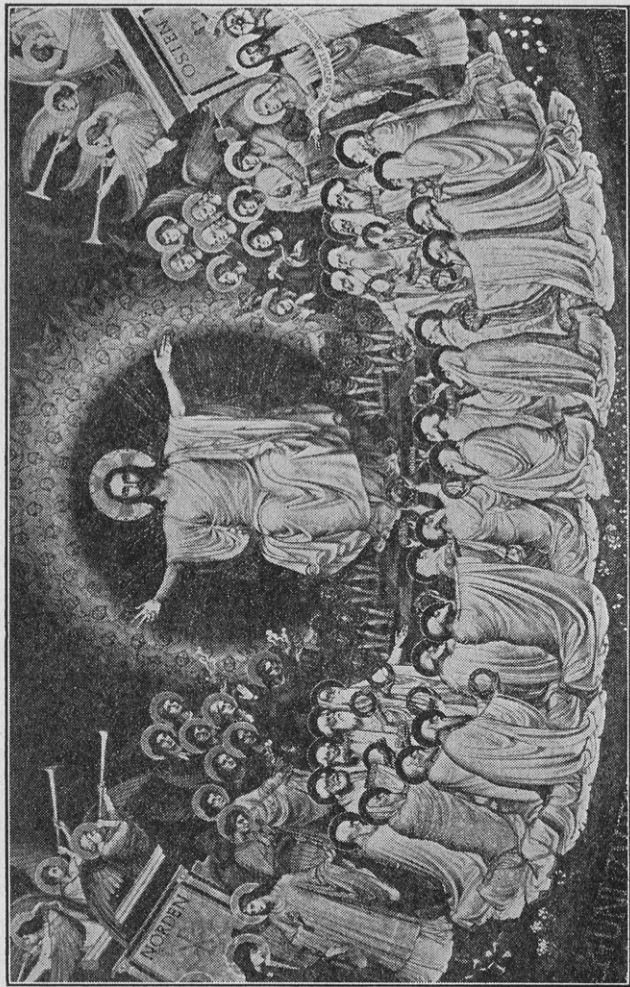
and has heard the people's heartfelt *Misereatur*, he still feels how very much he stands in need of divine mercy.

Slowly, almost hesitatingly, he ascends the altar steps, beseeching the Lord God graciously to look down upon him and all those present—to give to all His grace—to hear his humble prayer—to lend a gracious ear to the silent, though mighty, cry of Christian hearts—and thus fill that Christian assembly with holy joy.

Silently he prays: "Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that, being made pure in heart, we may be worthy to enter into the Holy of holies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." Bowing down over the altar, he kisses it and says: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of those of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to pardon me all my sins. Amen."

Will God hear this prayer? The priest hopes so; and yet he has no certainty. So now he lets the saints, God's friends, intervene; they must intercede for him and plead his cause with the almighty and all-merciful God. He bends low over the altar table and reverently kisses the altar stone that encloses the relics of the saints.

How touching this meeting with the saints, that is, with their mortal remains! It is as though one sees the heavens open and those blessed inhabitants descend upon the earth, in order to surround the altar with the fragrance of their adoration, in order to cover the spiritual poverty of the priest and of the faithful with the rich mantle of their merits. It is as though limitless fields of the rarest and most beautiful flowers unfold themselves before our eyes: humility, the spirit of sacrifice, Christian heroism, purity, in short, all the fair blossoms of virtue that adorned this heavenly host, who now for an hour come down to us from above, in order to adorn the altar and to give service of honor to the



THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN

“After this I saw a great multitude . . . and they cried with a loud voice, saying ‘Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb.’” (Apoc. 7: 9, 10.)

unspotted Lamb in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

If one only thinks of these revered relics, how the heart exults in high hope, how it throbs in burning love! The saints, too, in their day had to do battle against rebellious passions, and against the world, and against the devil. Perhaps at times they even suffered ignominious defeat. But nevertheless, with the help of God's grace, they did not lose courage, but bravely returned to the combat. Thus they remained the victors and consecrated the rest of their lives as holocausts of burning love for Jesus.

And who would dare to say that this Jesus, Who lavished upon them all the treasures of His pardon and His grace, has now nothing left for us who are engaged in similar, not to say greater and more dangerous, conflicts? When He comes down upon the altar here, will He not be surrounded, even as in other times, by crowds of souls that have the same sufferings to endure, that make the same petitions, that have the same high hopes in their hearts, and that are urged on by the same pressing necessity? And if He then forgave them, and purified and healed them, why should He not now also renew that miracle of His grace for us?

I greet you, saints of God, friends of the Most High, my brethren in Christ Jesus! The name that I bear was borrowed from you. The faith by which I live is the selfsame faith as was yours. The love that raises me to heaven is the very same love that makes you so blissfully happy in the Father's home. The Father to Whom I pray and the Mother whose intercession I ask are also your Father and your Mother.

O all ye saints of God, my brethren, come! Help me to celebrate the great love feast of Christian hearts!

A few more moments and Jesus will be with me. Oh,

do not let Him remain alone in the chilling coldness of my poor soul! Sing unto Him the songs that you sing in your heavenly home—the songs that please Him most. Surround Him with a love that is like unto His own. Dear saints of God, my brethren, I am singing, I am praying here with you. Oh, be so good as to carry to heaven above my prayers and my songs of praise!

Then the priest begins the *Introit*.

The Introit

The Introit is from the Latin “he enters.” In the ancient days the Introit, usually a selection from Holy Scripture, was chanted while the priest and his attendants were going in procession to the altar. Often, but not always, the Introit sounds the keynote of the Mass, e.g., rejoicing on Laetare Sunday, or it brings out some striking trait of a saint, for instance, St. Ignatius’ love of the Holy Name.

CHAPTER 4

PRAYER AND SONG

WHEN the soul speaks with God its speech should be music and song. Man is ever wont to give expression to his thoughts and feelings in soul-stirring songs. When his soul is moved, when he suffers and when he loves, he breaks into song, be it joyful or sad. The mighty creations in the realm of music are the re-echo of joyous jubilation, of deepest love, or of depressing sorrow and patient complaint. Music and song are a mysterious speech,—a language spoken by all the nations under the sun.

No one understands better than the Church how to convey the emotions of her children in expressive word and stirring melody. In all her solemn ceremonies, and especially at Holy Mass, she urges the faithful to liturgical song. And even if songs are not sung at every Holy Mass, nevertheless hidden and mysterious melodies ever make music in the heart of the devout worshipper kneeling at the foot of the altar,—harmonies that gently play upon all the strings of the sensitive human heart and sweetly touch the Heart of God and fill it with satisfaction.

Kyrie Eleison

These are Greek words. *Kyrie eleison* means, Lord, have mercy. *Christe eleison* means, Christ, have mercy. “The *Kyrie eleison*, that cry for mercy . . . seems introduced as if to give grander effect to the outburst of joy and praise which succeeds it in the *Gloria in excelsis*” (Cardinal Wiseman).

An alternate pleading, a repeated cry for mercy is now heard in the house of God: *Kyrie eleison . . . Christe eleison. . . .* Such the cry that now goes up from priest and people. Three times it is addressed to the Father, three times to the Son, three times to the Holy Ghost.

Kyrie eleison! . . . The East seems to unite itself with the West in order to bring its homage and adoration to the eternal God. The Greek world seems to spring up before us and with us to make the mighty Sacrifice that is here offered up for the whole world. This is the language of Hellas, the language of great poets, the language of Homer. All nations unite as one at the foot of the altar of Sacrifice.

Christe eleison! . . . And the soul is borne in spirit to far-distant climes. With the wings of faith it skims the waves of the Syrian sea. It traverses the broad expanses of the Orient. Now it has reached the little valley of Bethlehem. The Sacrificial Lamb, the Divine Savior, wished to surprise the world at His earliest coming and to greet it with the songs of angels.

The Gloria

The Gloria is the Church's greatest hymn of praise. Its first words are from the angels' hymn on the night of the Divine Savior's birth. In the Gloria the Church renders honor, and glory, and thanksgiving, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Because of its joyful character the Gloria is omitted in Masses of the dead and on days of mourning and penance.

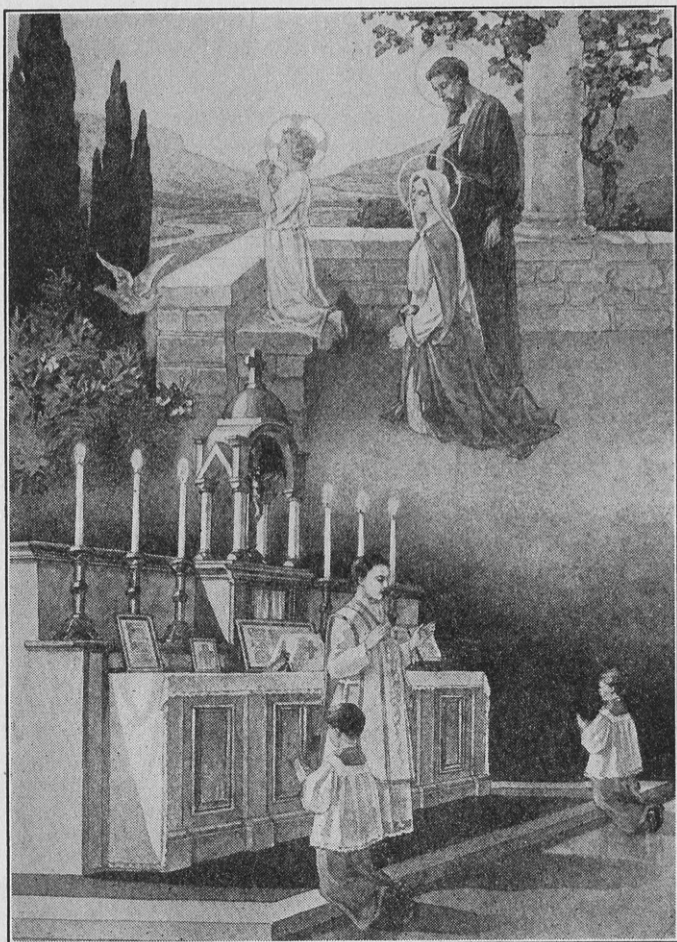
"GLORY be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.



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THE GLORIA

“Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.” (Luke 2: 14.)



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THE DOMINUS VOBISCUM

“God is a spirit: and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4: 24.)

stone, wherein rest the relics of the saints, as though he now needs their special assistance.

Thereupon he turns to the devout faithful and with outspread arms says: *Dominus vobiscum*—"The Lord be with you." As though he would have all those present filled with the riches of the grace of God. *Dominus vobiscum*. Only a few words; but how much they say to a soul that loves its God!

It is upon the stone table of the altar that the spotless Lamb of God offers Himself in fitting sacrifice for the honor and glory of God, in order to obtain grace and pardon for guilt-laden man. The altar becomes the throne of the love of God. From the altar the Bread which comes down from heaven is distributed to all the faithful in order that, thus nourished and strengthened with the same divine food, they may be of one mind and one heart with God and with each other in the love of God and of the neighbor.—What a wondrous thing to be of one mind and one heart with God!

Were this twofold union, between God and man, and between man and his fellow men, not realized, the Holy Sacrifice would not attain its object. For what else does the altar signify but perfect reconciliation and love?

God in His ineffable condescension seeks intimate union with man; and man simply must seek union with God: such union is absolutely necessary for man if he would attain the end for which he is created. God never fails in His endeavor to be one with man. But how does it stand with man? Alas! man often little understands and often, too, does not want to know anything about communion with God. People eagerly seek the friendship of the great and the powerful, but how many in a thousand have any regard for the friendship of God?

It ought not to surprise us, then, that during Holy Mass the priest again and again sends this greeting from the altar to those who are present: *Dominus vobiscum*—"The Lord be with you." It is a wish which the assembled congregation heartily returns; for the priest, too, has need of the help of God. What a misfortune for Catholics, and what a misfortune for the priest, when the Lord forsakes them and is with them no more. And ah! what a misfortune when man rejects His God! Men without God! Life away from God—a sad world—most pitiable creatures.

So it is quite evident how very suitable in Holy Mass is the short greeting *Dominus vobiscum* and the simple reply, *Et cum spiritu tuo*—"And with thy spirit." These two expressions are full of beauty and salutary instructions. Eight different times the priest sends us this greeting during Holy Mass. Pious reflection upon the meaning of these words will contribute much to a better understanding and a greater appreciation of the Mass.

A Greeting Full of Hope

O God-fearing souls, and all you who live but for God and heaven and place your hopes in His promises, all you who have had bitter experiences in the ways of this world and who now seek for naught but the love of God, all you who fight the hard fight for virtue against the snares and the enticements of sin, you who realize the incomparable dignity of the cross and are enthusiastic about it,—yes, devout souls one and all, receive that good wish of love which Christ's representative tenders you: "The Lord be with you."

Yes; full well he knows that you need God's assistance day after day. Christian charity tells him that

you need it. Charity speaks to him of your many cares, your trials and troubles, of your anxiety lest in the labyrinthine windings of this world you lose the way that leads to heaven or, already astray on the broad and seemingly smooth path of worldly pleasures, you slip and sadly fall! *Dominus vobiscum!* he calls encouragingly to you. With such a greeting you need not fear that you are journeying alone on the way to heaven. He gives you the official assurance that God Himself is with you, that the Savior is not only upon the altar here, but also wishes to come into the hearts of all; for you are not as strangers to the Lord—no; you are His privileged ones, His favorites, His Benjamins.

And O you unhappy, miserable souls who have, alas! been mortally wounded by sin and are thus in the greatest misfortune! Listen to that greeting so full of hope: "The Lord be with you." In all probability you have long been in silent search of your Savior, lost to you, God alone knows for how many years. Why not admit this, honestly and in all humility, in the hours when the voice of conscience ceaselessly makes bitter reproaches. This silent seeking, this indefinite yearning has been in your heart so many times, perhaps all along, and you know it. It was there when the disgust and surfeit of vice filled your soul, even when that vice forced you to associate in a seemingly pleasant way with the shameful friends of a vicious life. It was there when you were seized by a secret terror, lest the avenging hand of the almighty God suddenly strike you down in justice provoked by your life of sin and your obstinate defiance. It was present in the hours of bitter disappointment that you had to endure just when you were expecting moments of greatest joy. It was there when you saw death in your immediate vicinity, when he

broke a heart at your side, shattered a fond hope, put to an untimely end a love, when you had been persuaded that your happiness would last forever. It was there when grim death swung his scythe over your own head and you trembled to the very marrow of your bones, when he placed the germ of a deadly disease in your body, and there arose before you a picture of the grave that death would prepare for you. Ah yes; you might as well admit it, sinner, you have indeed often had the feeling that here below there is no getting along without God, much less against God. Is it not true?

Deplorable souls! But there is one—perhaps he is the only one in the world—who still has warmest sympathy for you and heartfelt love,—one who speaks also to great sinners a word that is sincere and laden with promises of happiness; a word that is to remind you that there is a God Who loves you none the less, Who loves you in spite of your sins, Who yearns most ardently for your spiritual regeneration, that He may again clothe you with the garment of grace wherewith He clothes His children. And this only one in the world is the priest of Jesus Christ.

Receive that word with devotion and with love. Preserve it in your heart as a precious treasure. And reflect upon it in the hours of your solitude, as one is wont to think only of a promise given us by heaven: *Dominus vobiscum!*

Yes; reflect upon how delightful it was when the Lord was with you! Think of the bright days of your innocence, now perhaps trampled upon and lost. Think of the rare happiness of those times when you conversed with God as with a dear and familiar and loving friend, when your whole soul, still inviolate and pure, lost itself and was all absorbed in Jesus. Think of the glowing

enthusiasm for everything good with which you were filled, of the generosity with which you bravely made sacrifices for the Savior's sake, of the resolutions you were wont to make at the break of dawn and faithfully to keep to the fall of night. Yes; and think of how quiet and peaceful your sleep was then, how you laid yourself to rest with the blessing of God, carefully guarded by the angel that He had sent from heaven for your protection, guarded by your good mother, who was a visible Guardian Angel to you—ah yes; just reflect upon the sweet joys of those other days. Oh, how far, far distant those days may be to you—so long has the Lord not been with you!

But yes—it is possible for that beautiful time to return again; your heart can be happy once more. With all humility and with perfect faith hear the *Dominus vobiscum*, the wish of love sent you by the priest who stands at the altar of God and calls down from heaven the spotless Lamb slain for you, slain for your sins.

And oh, you souls who are tried in the fires of tribulation, tell me, for whom, if not for you, can this *Dominus vobiscum* be, this word of comfort and of faith. The busy world and the votaries thereof have already often inflicted many a deep wound upon you. But words of comfort they have none; they know nothing of the art of healing souls. Make haste, then! Gather round the priest at the altar, see how with open arms he extends to you the liturgy's innermost greeting of Christian love—*Dominus vobiscum*.

And do you know why that pain fell to your lot? why that sickness so consumes you? God, Lord and Master of your life, would purify and sanctify you through sufferings that have in them a little something of the sufferings of Mount Calvary.

Twice miserable would you be, were the Lord to withdraw from you at a time when His Fatherly hand rests heavily upon you, when you must experience in your own body how hard the cross can be. But is not that the very reason why the Savior with His cross is with you—in order to unite His own Sacrifice with yours? Every cross, provided one receives it gladly and out of love for God, is salutary and sanctifying. Ah yes; the Savior is very near to us then,—very, very near.

May the Lord be with you always, souls so sorely tried. The Lord be with you to receive your woe into His own Heart, to count the tears that run down your cheeks. . . . May He be with you in the sorrowful stillness of your little room when it reminds you so much of the pitiful desolation of the Garden of Olives. The Lord be with you that you may learn to give this chalice back to the Savior Himself, after the spirit of sacrifice and your own quiet heroism have made of it a chalice of reparation. May He be with you then when hope beckons that now at last, after a long, long way of the cross, you may speak your *Consummatum est*—"It is finished"—and rest forever on the bosom of Him Who was called the Man of Sorrows.

O you souls, filled with sadness and grief of heart, to whom gall and vinegar alone is offered,—souls whose spirit of sacrifice and conscientious devotedness are repaid by your being taken advantage of and lowered in the estimation of others, and taunted with simplicity, and put to shame before others—can it be possible that you have not the proper appreciation of the spiritual depth and beauty of the *Dominus vobiscum*? Tell me, who gives you this greeting? Is it just an ordinary mortal who passes by and calls out his greeting

mechanically as he goes? No; he is Christ's representative; and armed with the very authority of God he addresses this greeting to you. Not only with words does the priest wish that the Lord be with you; no, he would give you the Lord Himself; no, he has the power to lay Him even in your heart.

Come, then, and come with alacrity, to hear those beautiful words each morning. Come, take them home with you. During the day draw new strength and courage therefrom. Unite them with your strains of deepest mourning; for then you will sing the *Miserere* of your life in tones so clear and strong that both the blessed inhabitants of heaven and the wavering children of earth will listen attentively to the wondrous song.

Its Echo in the Hearts of the Faithful

The priest's *Dominus vobiscum*—"The Lord be with you"—finds a fitting echo in the hearts of the faithful. *Et cum spiritu tuo*—"And with thy spirit"—such is the response that comes back to the priest at the altar. It is a dialogue, brief and measured, indeed, but withal as lofty and sublime as the speech of an angel. It is a unification of hearts, a tie that builds into one two persons who, in the designs of God, should never be estranged from each other; for priest and laic are animated by the same hopes, experience in their souls the same urgent necessities, and must undergo the like miseries as they journey on in this vale of tears, knowing that through many tribulations shall we enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is utterly impossible for the faithful to thank the priest for the unspeakable benefit and grace of one single Holy Mass. Not even were they to place at his feet all the treasures of the earth could they sufficiently thank

him; for what are all the treasures, all the riches of the earth, nay, what is all creation itself compared with the Creator almighty and incomprehensible, Whom the priest gives us in Holy Mass. And here we pause to make a weighty remark. Surely it is now clear that no one can pay for a Holy Mass. "How much does a Mass cost?" is a silly and ignorant question. The little money that one is accustomed to offer is merely a token of appreciation of the goodness and generosity of the priest who, instead of saying Mass for himself and his own intentions, which he has a perfect right to do, offers the adorable Sacrifice for the one who makes the request. And, after all, "The priest should live from the altar."

The faithful have a simple yet expressive word of thanks for the priest. It is the *Et cum spiritu tuo*. God expects from His people this greeting of thanks; for this greeting brings new graces and blessings down upon the priest, thus making more resplendent, more precious still the heavenly crown wherewith the Lord one day will crown the head of His representative on earth.

So do not hesitate, you good Catholic people. From the depths of your hearts send to the priest the beautiful greeting, *Et cum spiritu tuo*. Repeat often, even many times each day the simple yet weighty words: "May the Lord ever be, and may He ever remain, with the spirit, with the hearts of His priests!"

Ah, how very much these true servants of the Most High stand in need of His assistance and of His constant help and ceaseless support! Also the priest, indeed, especially the priest, needs the Fatherly hand of God to protect him and to hold him up, lest he succumb to human weakness. Also he stands in need of being ever strengthened and refreshed, that he may always remain

victorious in the midst of the storm of assaults let loose against him by the malice of men and the fury of hell. Satan and his helpers in the world know only too well that if they bring about the fall of a priest he will not fall alone; generally a number of other souls, nay, even a vast multitude, are dragged down into the abyss with him: in his falling they fall. Also the priest needs a very special gift of perseverance, in order to remain true to his exalted calling, so fraught with difficulties and dangers and weighty responsibilities. Also he has need of the fire of a holy zeal,—a fire that will warm his heart, enkindle his fervor, and enlighten his spirit, that he may remain abreast of the ever growing spiritual wants of the souls God has confided to his care. It is precisely the priest who cannot get along without the refreshing showers of divine grace which alone preserve the soul from the faults and sins that would make the rendering of an account of his stewardship before the judgment seat of God terrible indeed.

Catholic people, how is it that you reflect so little upon this? that you take so little to heart—or perhaps not at all—the manifold spiritual needs of the priest? To how many do you give the help of a pious prayer? How often, may I ask, do you pray for your priests? You wish to see them perfect; you are disturbed and scandalized and critical about the least little shadow of imperfection or sin on their part; but then why do you not pray more for them? They pray whole hours for you every single day! O Catholic people, tell me, will you not from now on gladly come to their assistance?

Yes; pray for your priest, O Catholic soul! Write the liturgical wish of the Church, that return greeting so short yet so beautiful, *Et cum spiritu tuo*, into your

heart; and adorn it with works that are an evidence of your lively faith and your ardent charity.

Love of God and the Neighbor

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which greatest of divine services is, alas! neglected by so many Catholics,



LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOR

“Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matth. 22: 37-39.)

there is such a wealth of sanctity, holiness, and grace that, if our faith would but properly utilize and appropriate unto itself this treasure, virtue would bloom in greatest splendor the wide world over.

What an entirely different appearance human society would assume, were the hearts of all really penetrated with the *Dominus vobiscum*. Love of the neighbor, this queen of the hearts of men that has such heaven-sent harmony in her retinue, would then not stand before the debris of devastated kingdoms, as is now the case in this world of ours.

Ah, how different things would be here below if the Lord God were really made to feel at home with His creature man, if He were really with him; how different if all Christians, all peoples, through the mediatorship of the priesthood, would live in peace and unity, bearing with each other's faults and mutually assisting one another! If they would but at length learn to put aside egotism, mistrust, and avarice and bring to an end the enmities arising therefrom! If they would but once for all look upon themselves as brothers and sons of one and the same heavenly Father and love each other accordingly! If they would but consider themselves as sheep of the one same fold and gather trustingly round the Good Shepherd! Why is it that the Church must only too often weep over dissension, separation, and disunion among Christians! Whence comes the rebellion of the faithful against the priests? Whence the bitter hatred and the streams of blood shed among Christian nations? Ah, it is solely because, and only when, we have lost the Lord God, when He is no longer with us or is no longer given the place that is rightly His. And where we do not find the Lord, there we find His teaching forgotten: *Diligite alterutrum*—"Love one another."

O why is Christian charity, the love of the neighbor, not more assiduously cultivated? It is a spark of the divinity, so to speak, which heaven itself has planted deep in the human heart that it may transfigure,

beautify, and conciliate everything here below. It is a ray of light emitted from the Heart of Jesus and penetrating the hearts of men, only to return and be lost in God again after it has run its course and transformed everything into life eternal. Why so little charity? Here, too, we must sadly admit that it is solely because and only when the Lord is with us no longer.

Therefore it is that He must of necessity be permitted to make solemn entry into His kingdom once more, if He is no longer with us. O let the Lord come back to us! Let us go forth to meet Him, and bring Him back in triumph, and erect His throne in our midst again. We must bow beneath the scepter of His divine dominion. We must tell Him that we longed to have Him in our midst again that we might render Him due homage. Unto Him we must pledge our everlasting obedience and fidelity. We must pledge ourselves to defend His rights and to offer Him not only the incense of adoration but also, if needs be, the supreme personal sacrifice of death for Him.

Happy, thrice happy the souls, happy the homes and the families, happy the cities and the nations where the priest with joyous heart can send forth to all from the altar the liturgical greeting of love and where all accept this greeting with glad and grateful hearts and return it in all sincerity. Yes; blessed the people with whom the *Dominus vobiscum* calls forth a reechoing *Et cum spiritu tuo*, where Christian love gives expression to its heartfelt gratitude and its pious supplication in the sincere and devout prayer: "May the Lord be with the spirit, with the soul of our priests; may He guide and govern them always!"

CHAPTER 5

LET US PRAY

The Prayer or Collect.

After this greeting the priest says, *Oremus*, "Let us pray," exhorting the congregation to join him in the prayer of the Mass. This prayer is found in the Missal immediately after the Introit. The number of prayers varies according to the day. It usually begins with an address to the Almighty, is followed by an appeal expressed very briefly and fervently, and always ends with mention of the Three Divine Persons. God Himself seems to have inspired the composer of these ancient petitions. No prayers can compare with them in simplicity and unction.

THE priest continues his prayer; but not he alone. All the assembled faithful should pray with him. *Oremus*. "Let us pray." Again and again we find the *Oremus* on the lips of the priest in conjunction with the *Dominus vobiscum*. This union of words should remind us of the union of all hearts with the heart of the priest.

With some few exceptions, the priest at the altar speaks in the plural number. This we may not forget, if we wish rightly to understand the part that the faithful take in the Mass. The whole body of the faithful is invited to unite themselves heart and soul with the priest and as far as possible to use the same words that he uses in this most sacred liturgical prayer. The priest, therefore, does not stand there alone when he speaks with God; he has the assembled faithful around him.

O Christian people, how great you are at the foot of the altar! How high the dignity that is accorded to you in Holy Mass! Do you realize that? You stand before

God like unto a priest, as it were. *Oremus.* "Let us pray." *Offerimus tibi.* "We offer to Thee, O God." Hence, not only the priest, no; but all of us here present offer to Thee, O God, this Sacrifice. *Ut nobis Corpus fiat Domini nostri Jesu Christi.* "That this bread become



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THE COLLECT

"And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matth. 21: 22.)

for us the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, not only for the priest alone but also for all of us here present, also for me, poor sinner that I am.

Ah yes, you poor and much despised mortal man, when

you hear a Holy Mass you stand beside the priest at the altar, higher far than the highest and most esteemed out in the world; you yourself offer the adorable Lamb of Sacrifice to the eternal God, by the hands of the priest. O the marvel of the greatness of a Catholic soul! O Christian, *si scires donum Dei*—"if thou didst but know the gift of God!"

The orations of the Mass—short but laden with an abundance of most perfect prayer. If only the faithful were more deeply imbued with their true spirit! There is no want, no hope, no yearning that does not find expression in Holy Mass. Every resigned complaint, every affliction of the Christian people comes to the lips of the priest and thence goes directly to the throne of God. All—and everything—are given due consideration in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The ceaseless conflicts in which man is constantly engaged with the enemies of his material welfare, and especially those with the enemies of his salvation; the oftentimes trying position in which the Catholic finds himself with respect to human society and the Church; all the vicissitudes of life, good fortune and misfortune; the Church has thought of them all. And everything contributes its share to the marvelous harmony in the grand liturgical prayer of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

But in all these prayers the thought of life everlasting holds the most prominent place and the place of mightiest import. The glance of priest and people does not remain fixed upon the altar; nay, it pierces the very heavens, passes on into the eternal years. To offer to the Most High infinite adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, petition; to save souls; to obtain peace; to see God; to love Him; to possess Him forever; such are the great purposes of Holy Mass. To beg of the Almighty that His

Fatherly hand may deign to wipe away tears from our eyes here in this land of exile, is surely good and beautiful. But to beg of Him to fill our hearts with the immortal joys of His love and His bliss, how much more noble that is, and how much more meritorious, and how much more worthy of a soul cleansed in the waters of Christian baptism!

The Best Time for Prayer

There is no better time for prayer than the time of Holy Mass. In that hour the soul, athirst for graces, finds itself nearest to the Giver of all graces. That is the hour especially chosen by the love of a God Who is eager to dispense His benefits—the hour in which He, so to speak, gives free rein to His generosity.

Of course, it is very edifying to see devout throngs of lovers of Our Lady gathered round altars or statues of the Queen of Heaven. And I can sincerely say, faithful children of Holy Church, that you can never go too far in your devotion and your confidence towards her whom we rightly invoke as the Help of Christians; you can never be too devoted to the Mother of God. Surely; kneel humbly and hopefully before her images, which speak so lovingly and consolingly to troubled hearts. Sing more jubilantly still the praises of her who for centuries has been the inspiration of gifted writers and speakers. Praise and exalt ever more and more the Maid of Nazareth whose gracious intercession has caused innumerable shrines and chapels to arise in her honor, witnesses all of the love and gratitude of her children. Yes; hasten with all joy to the mother of divine grace. But do not, because of this, neglect the altars of the Holy Mass. These altars offer your piety, your hope, your love, not merely a picture, a symbol, as is the case with the

images of Our Lady: they give you the Savior Himself, in Person, in all reality.

Here it is not a case of the mediation of a creature, even though that creature be the highest and the holiest of all; here we offer God the mediation, the merits and the intercession of His own well-beloved Son. And what are all the merits and intercessions of all the saints, taken together, compared with those of the Savior? If Mary's intercession is already so soothing, so satisfying for the heart in need of grace, what must the intercession of Jesus be!

Soft and gentle is the radiance of the moon as it dispels the darkness of our long nights. But we must not, because of this radiance, veil the sun; for it is the sun that gives us the light of day; it is the sun that warms the earth. It is the sun that makes fruitful fields tilled in the sweat of the brow. It is the sun that keeps man, plants, and animals in existence. And the gentle, lovely silver beams of the mellow moon, filling us with such quiet joy, are but the reflection of the glowing sun.

Neglect in Praying the Mass

Ah, what a glorious liturgical revival we could anticipate, were love and veneration for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass once again to occupy in the hearts of our Catholic people the place that it deserves! How much to be desired that each morning dense crowds of the faithful would hasten to the Savior, even as of olden times when He dwelt visibly amongst us, when men took refuge to Him in every need, in every misery, in every misfortune.

How about you, young people of our day! How is it that you manifest so little enthusiasm for Holy Mass and remain so far away from the altar of God? You young

men and young women and you newly-wed, how is it that you are seen so rarely in church? Do you perhaps imagine that the Savior no longer knows how to read your hearts? that He is no longer aware of your hopes and aspirations? that He is no longer merciful and will no longer relieve your wants nor cure your weakness nor bind up your wounds of sin? Have you really made yourselves believe that He no longer has the power to fight your battles for you, to recommend your impetuous, inexperienced souls to the goodness of His Father, to forgive you your sins and failings, to crown all your efforts with success, and to provide for your happiness? You poor, mistaken creatures! Why, it is just His blessing that makes each individual and every family rich even in the joys and the goods of this life. Were He to curse them, they would be as poor as paupers and in a veritable ocean of misery.

Here you have the God Who led Rebecca to Jacob; Who gave Tobias an angel to guide him; Who gave unto Esther her beauty, for the welfare of His people; Who gave a crown to David, wisdom to Solomon, strength to Samson. In whom will you place your trust, if not in this God? Why do you not place your future in His hands?

And how little feeble old age thinks of sending the last rays of the sunset of life to the altar as a sacrifice of penance and adoration! Strange that after so many years, spent perhaps in sins for which they have not done penance, they should not even feel the need of washing their souls pure in the Blood of the spotless Lamb of God! Have not the aged, standing on the threshold of eternity, every reason to speak with God and to propitiate Him? Indeed, they must needs propitiate Him, this God Who listens with pleasure to every word that comes from

a sincere heart—Who receives the sinner with open arms—Who ever has a Father's heart for His children, also, nay, especially, when they come to Him weighed down with the burden of years, when the merciless hand of time has been dealing hard with them and they, stripped of the affections and attractions of youth, have become a burden to the growing generation around them.

And yet—what rare beauty of soul, what precious goodness of heart is oftentimes reflected from a face framed with silver threads that once were gold!

O you aged, one and all! Why not bring to God the freshness and animation of a heart that has remained youthful always? Why not bring to Him the last sparkle of your eyes? For this God rejoices over the gentlest beating of a heart that throbs with love of Him.

The Mass a Golden Key

It is hard to understand. There are so many people, young and old, rich and poor, who yearn for someone who understands them, who sympathizes with and encourages them; but generally they are plunged into still greater loneliness and dissatisfaction and suffer bitter disappointments. These poor people are looking for someone to console them, for someone who can feel with them. Oh, why do they not realize that only the Savior can give joy and happiness? It is He alone Who can comfort all, Who has promised to all an eternal reward for their combats, and the light of the Holy Ghost. When will they understand that God often renders unsatisfying and fruitless the words and works of earthly comforters and benefactors, simply to punish those who first have recourse to creatures, instead of having recourse to God, simply to show that for a Christian the first and truest comforter should be His beloved Jesus.

Faith and Christian doctrine would be less neglected among our Catholic people were they more quick and willing to take up a religious book and enter deeper into the beauties of Catholic teaching or add to their knowledge thereof. Then Holy Mass would not be something so strange and unintelligible to so many of them. Had they done so, it would never have come to pass that so many Catholics evince such a shocking indifference, if not, alas, such an aversion, for this most exalted of our treasures.

Were Christian faith not so superficial, if Christian conviction had taken deeper root, all Catholics would, at least on special occasions, find their way to Mass in days of joy and of sorrow. Not only would they lay their plans on God's altar, in order to draw His blessing, this prime factor in all our undertakings, down upon them, but also all their successes, in order to place them under the protection of the Most High. Youth and maiden would then go to Holy Mass when attraction to higher things buds forth in their hearts—and when sweet, endearing pleasures beckon them on—and when sufferings and disappointments afflict them cruelly. They would go to Mass when they are yearning for a true and tender love that knows no deception, that breaks no trusting heart—a love that never dies.

Sad to say, nowadays the bond of authority and submission that should bind parents and children together has become so loose and in only too many families that one can truly say it no longer exists. Whence come these unnatural conditions in family life? It is because families live without the Savior—because they make a big detour round the hill of Calvary (Holy Mass) and have perhaps entirely forgotten the way to church—because their prayers (if still they pray) are no longer

saturated with the Blood of Jesus and are therefore ineffective.

In our day we are faced with mighty and momentous problems affecting the moral regeneration of the world and social peace and Christian charity among the nations. For all these problems we have a swift and simple solution—a golden key. It is Holy Mass—Holy Mass offered with genuine devotion by all the faithful. It is the Mass that matters; and hence the growth in our day of the liturgical movement whose center is the Mass.

Through Christ our Lord

Now a word about the conclusion of the prayer of the Church just begun with the *Oremus*.

It is deplorable that the great majority of our Catholic people enter little or not at all into the spirit of the liturgy of Holy Mass. They seem to look upon the liturgy as mere formalism, an empty form. How few there are, for instance, who attach the proper importance to this constantly recurring conclusion in the Church's liturgy: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*—"Through Jesus Christ our Lord." But with God these words have the same weight and importance as the signature of one mighty ruler with other rulers of equal might.

"Through Christ our Lord" is the divine seal affixed to the humble petition of man. And in an instant poor human pleading is changed into a divine command. Such is the power that lies in prayer said in the name of Jesus. Worthless our prayer, if it lacks this signature.

Our daily needs and the necessities of life do indeed give us a certain privilege, if not a right, to approach God in humble petition; and all in all they exert some influence upon His heart. But how insignificant that influence really is!

When we betake ourselves to prayer we have recourse to the King of heaven and earth. We desire to be presented to Him, to have an audience with Him. But we poor sinners cannot without further ado appear before the throne of the Most High. As strangers and beggars we would have to stand waiting before the palace of the



THE TRANSFIGURATION

“This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” (Matth. 3: 17.)

King, had we no one to recommend us and to procure for us access to the throne. What wonder, then, if we poor beggars would not succeed in having our petitions heard? The Savior thought of that. And hence He desires that we seal all our petitions to the Father with the

name of Jesus. It were quite inexcusable not to employ this sacred seal: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In His goodness and love the Savior has placed the treasures of His merits in our hands, in order that we poor mortal men may have a means of obtaining every grace from the Eternal Father. The merits of Jesus are like presents of gold to us, with which we can acquire all graces from Almighty God. Then why do we not offer this treasure to the Father, imploring Him to accept it in exchange for the graces of which we stand in need and which we so much desire?

Our spiritual poverty is in great part the result of our thoughtlessness. We pray but receive nothing in return, because we forget to enrich and strengthen ourselves through the power and the name of Jesus and through the efficacy of that same Savior's infinite merits. We assist at Holy Mass; we know that the Savior is upon the altar just for us; and yet we forget to offer Him to the Eternal Father. We ought to take Jesus into our hands, as it were; we ought to bring Him to the Father and say: "Almighty and eternal God, behold, it is now Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Who here prays to Thee, and not I, a poor sinner. Therefore, I beseech Thee to grant me these graces, for Thy Son's sake; because of His infinite merits I beg of Thee to listen to my pleading. God of goodness, couldst Thou turn away Thy face from me now and send me away with empty hands?"

Thrice happy and blessed they who know how to appear before God with the name of Jesus on their lips, with the merits of Jesus in their hands! Yes; thrice blessed they! God's goodness will hear them; God's love will crown them; God's grace will make them eternally happy.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING TO KNOW HIM WHO IS COMING

GOD lends a gracious ear to the prayers of His priest. He is about to send His only-begotten Son from heaven down upon the altar as a proof of His infinite love for men. Only a little while now and Jesus will be with us.

Alert with expectation, the Christian soul awaits the coming of its Savior. Who is this Savior? He is Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, Who offers Himself for our sins. He is our God, our Friend and Brother, the Spouse of our souls—in short, He is the dearest and the best Gift that we have, or can imagine, or wish for. And not only that: the Savior is the immortal King of ages; He is the Lord of creation, to Whom all things in heaven and on earth are subject. And if now, through His omnipotence and through His love, He comes down upon the altar as the lowly sacrificial Lamb, in order thereon of His own free will to offer Himself for us anew, He nevertheless comes in a manner befitting His divine majesty.

Announcement

When a mighty monarch wishes to make His appearance among his subjects he does not come suddenly and unexpectedly. No; he announces himself and lets his good pleasure be known long before he actually appears. He sends heralds in advance. His pictures are displayed in public places. The people are made acquainted with his personality, with his power and greatness, his benevolence and condescension, that they may fully realize

who is coming to them and may make every effort to prepare for their ruler a solemn reception; for in such manner they seek to merit his approval and his bounty.

So, too, with Jesus. Before He first appeared on earth in flesh and blood, at Bethlehem, He had had Himself announced and faithfully described by numerous patriarchs and prophets and by those whom we call the figures of Christ in the Old Law. And now that He is about to come to us in the Eucharistic species He does the same. In every Holy Mass He sends His forerunners in advance, who are to prepare the way for Him. They are the same patriarchs, the same prophets. Constantly they appear anew as the heralds of the King. But now the ranks of this splendid array have been increased by His Apostles and Evangelists.

All these great historic personages speak to us of Jesus as of God, as of Man, as of a Savior, as of a King of heaven and earth, a Lawgiver, Judge, Remunerator. They let us hear His voice already now, from the distance. They announce His commands, His promises, His threats to us. They draw an accurate picture of His person, of His life and labors; they tell us of His works; they depict His bitter sufferings and death; they speak rapturously of His indescribable glory. And thereby is unfolded before the eyes of faith a sacred history that embraces thousands of years. It is the history of the Savior of the world: of how He was foretold; of how the nations yearned for Him and eagerly awaited His coming; of how, in the happy fullness of time, He became man, and was born, and lived among us, and died; of how He arose from the dead on the third day and finally ascended into heaven.

Would that our souls, at the recital of such wondrous events from the history of the Savior, were penetrated

with the living enthusiastic faith of those olden times! The centuries bore witness to this gradual and solemn development of faith in a Redeemer to come; from gen-



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THE PROPHET ISAIAS BEHOLDS OUR SAVIOUR IN HIS VISIONS

“For a Child is born to us . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace.” (Isai. 9: 6.) . . . “God Himself will come and will save you.” (Isai. 35: 4.) . . . “He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter . . .” (Isai. 53: 7.)

eration to generation it grew more pronounced, until finally the Expected of the nations came.

Here we have the Epistle and the Gospel! They are the outlines of Jesus, already known to us in the distance. They are the voice of Jesus, already distinguishable to

us from afar, even before we see Him under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Epistle

The Epistle is a passage from the Bible read after the last prayer. Invariably it is announced as *Lectio*—a reading. It may be a reading from the Epistles of the New Testament, or an extract from the Old Testament. The custom of reading parts of the Bible in public is very ancient. It is quite likely that the early Church followed the Temple tradition in this respect. At the end of the Epistle the people were wont to answer, *Deo Gratias*, “Thanks be to God,” the response now said by the server. After the Epistle comes the *Gradual* which, as we now have it, is composed of only two psalm verses. Originally a whole psalm was sung by the deacon between the Epistle and Gospel. It was introduced to keep up the interest of the faithful during the very long ceremonies of the ancient Church. There is evidence to show that the people liked good singing. The Alleluia, a Hebrew expression meaning “Praise ye the Lord,” is repeated twice after the Gradual. It is omitted during the penitential season, its place then being taken by the *Tract*. The *Sequence* is a hymn used on certain occasions. Five Sequences are found today in the Romal Missal; there were many others in the Middle Ages.

The Epistle, as the word itself tells us, is a letter. Jesus Himself had it composed by His ambassadors and has sent it to us. Therein He enlightens us regarding His divine Person, His mission, and His love for us. The Christian must, accordingly, read it with the greatest attention and must take to heart and follow its salutary lessons; for it is a letter from God’s own hand.

The Epistle differs from day to day. It ever shows us this or that page of Holy Writ, of that book which in the truest sense of the word is called “the divine book.” To-day it may be a historical page: we see a king, a patriarch! They are types of the Divine Savior, Who was to appear in the fullness of time. Tomorrow we may

hear the mighty voice of a prophet! He tells us of the many promises of the Lord; he strengthens and vivifies the hope of the nations in a Redeemer to come; he threatens the obdurate and rebellious people with the punishments of God; he glorifies Him Who is to come in the name of the Lord. Or, again, some divinely inspired sage arises. He lauds the beauty and the power of virtue and the glorious reward given to him who remains true to God; and he shows how sweet it is to live in the service of the Lord.

And always there are passages that transport us back into those olden times when faithful souls gazed longingly up to heaven to see if the star of Jacob would not soon arise, those olden times in which the Hebrew religion demanded of its priests that they bring bloody sacrifices without ceasing unto Jehovah,—sacrifices that were but a faint shadow and symbol of the Lamb spotless, pure, and undefiled.

The Gospel

The Gospel is an extract from one of the four Evangelists. Our English word *gospel*, from the Anglo-Saxon *god* (good) *spell* (speak), signifies good news. In Apostolic days the sacred text was read at some length during the liturgical services of the Church. Later on, Pope Damasus (A.D. 304-384) selected definite passages, bound them in a book called the *Evangeliarum* and appointed them to be read on certain days. The portion of the Gospel read in Mass is chosen for the useful lesson it imparts. Before the priest reads, he signs himself with the cross upon the forehead, lips and heart, the symbolism of the act being at once apparent. A homily or sermon followed the public reading of the Gospel. The catechumens and penitents were then excluded, so that the Mass up to this point was called the Mass of the Catechumens. Only the faithful might remain for the Sacred Mystery, hence the Mass from the Offertory to the end was called the Mass of the faithful.



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THE GOSPEL

“Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying ‘the time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.’” (Mark 1: 14, 15.)

The Epistle accordingly is a preparation for the Eucharistic coming of the Savior. Hence, when shortly the unspotted sacrificial Lamb appears upon the altar we shall already have a lofty opinion of Him. After having perused the letter God has sent us through His ambassadors, we shall likewise have a better understanding of His mission. That is indeed much; but it is not enough for us. Is it not possible to get a still better idea of the Savior? Is there not a medium of some kind between the letters of our loved ones and their personal presence? There is; and we have that medium in a photograph or painting that is true to nature. And such a picture we have from the hand of the Divine Master Himself. It is His holy Gospel. Therein the Savior is clearly depicted; there the living God-Man stands before us.

Every Christian has had occasion to hear more or less about the holy Gospels; but, sad to say, many have a very insufficient knowledge of their contents. And yet, in reality, everyone ought to be eager to take up this wondrous book first of all; for the Gospels are the living word of Jesus Christ. With head uncovered and on bended knees, with deepest reverence and heartfelt gratitude ought one to read them.

The priest now goes over to the right-hand side of the altar to read a portion of this word of God. But before passing the crucifix he bows low over the altar and implores the omnipotent God to purify his heart and his lips. Do you know why he makes this humble prayer? Out of reverence and love for the divine word.

Would to God that also you, souls grown cold as ice, had at least a little of this love and this reverence! And also you, prophets of unbelief, who see and wish to see in our holy Gospels nothing more than a venerable old

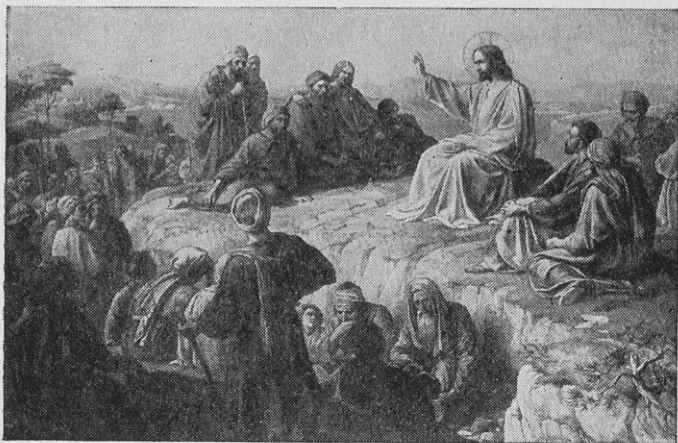
book whose historical and moral worth you would dispute or even call into question! And you, proud spirits who are not ashamed to drag it before the judgment seat of a rationalistic criticism whose praise or blame are equally ridiculous! And you, Christian families, in which a book of the holy Gospels is seldom or never taken in hand and who find it only wearisome and uninteresting if by chance you should happen to glance through its pages! Have you forgotten that this book is the book of life for each and for every one? How can you close your eyes to what is happening around you and is a matter of daily observation? With the holy Gospels the Savior Himself enters into the family circle; and He brings with Him either the blessings of His salvation or the punishments of His rejection, according to the reception which is accorded His Gospel in the home.

And thus the divine figure of Jesus stands out more prominently before us. We no longer hear the voice of a prophet; no longer does a patriarch draw for us the outlines of the Savior Christ; no: it is Jesus Himself Whose voice we now hear and Whose form we see reflected in the crystal-clear stream of sacred historical truth.

Yes; there we have the Savior. His whole life passes before the mind's eye: the Child, the Youth, the Carpenter, the Teacher, the Apostle, the Wonderworker, the Martyr, the Victor—all this the holy book shows us.

There we hear from His own lips those principles that alone can improve the morals of our time, and raise our hopes, and purify our hearts, and enthuse us for all that is good. There we hear from His own divine lips those incomparable parables wherewith He teaches us the great truths of heaven, hell, eternity, the history and the end of man, and many other things that would have

remained obscure and unsolved had He not presented them to us in a manner so simple and telling. They are presented in so simple and clear a fashion that even the ignorant can easily grasp them and the greatest and keenest intellects of all times have bowed in amazement before their depth, their dignity, and their unequalled beauty.



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

“... He went up into a mountain. And when He was set down, His disciples came unto Him and opening His mouth, He taught them.” (Matth. 5: 1, 2.)

Learning to Know the Savior

The holy Gospels are indispensable if we would properly understand the mighty drama enacted on Calvary's heights. He who knows nothing of the Savior's words and works will not be able to understand why He died for us upon the cross. So, too, we may say that the Catholic who does not read and assimilate the word of God will understand next to nothing of the

meaning of the Host which he sees the hands of the priest raise aloft and then place upon the altar. He will not properly know that the Host abides in the tabernacle to aid us in all our needs, to be our strong support in the fulfillment of all our duties, and to satisfy all our yearnings for love.

What is the Host anyhow? Why is it there? What rights has it to my heart, to my soul, to my life? What duties have I in its regard? Such are the questions a Catholic will then ask himself. And they will be just so many riddles to him if he does not know Jesus. And how is he to know Jesus if he does not read and meditate on His holy Gospels?

Learned men may affirm that there are other ways and means of acquiring a true knowledge of Holy Mass and that the holy Gospels are not the only way. But this much remains true: for a Catholic who would be intimately united with Jesus, Who is the beauty and the center of the Adorable Sacrifice, it is not only advisable but entirely necessary that he first read a page or more of His divine book and gratefully reflect upon His words and deeds.

Nearer and nearer draws the moment in which we will have the Savior in our midst,—the moment in which He will visit us as a good Friend and bring rich treasures along.

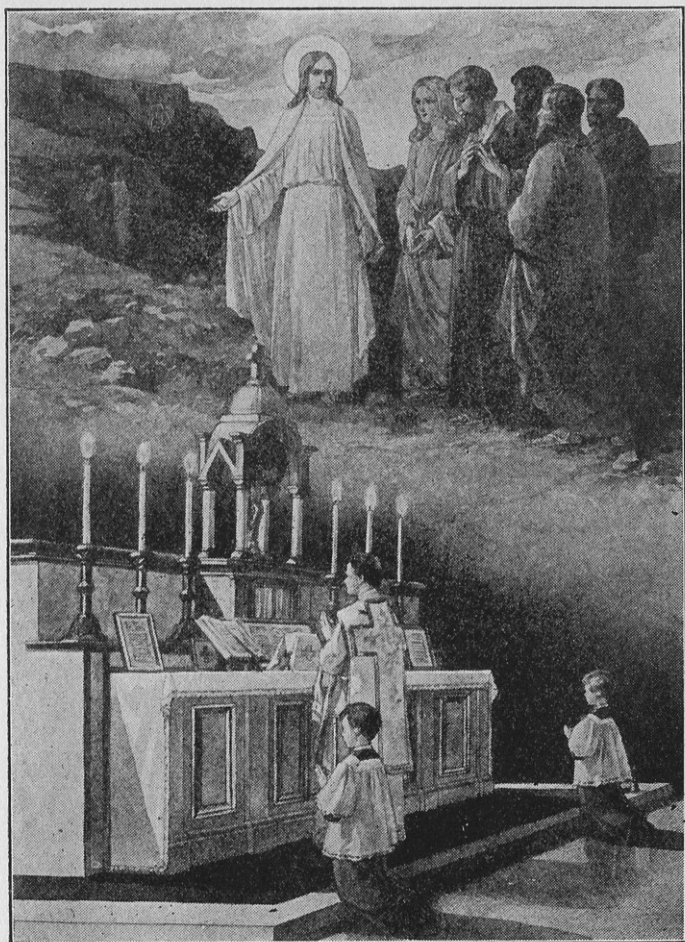
Who would ever dare approach a mighty ruler without first informing himself with whom he is going to have the privilege of an audience? And we Christians would dare to ascend Calvary's heights, to place ourselves beneath the cross, to gather up the Blood of Jesus there and to offer it to the Eternal Father—in other words, to draw near to the Holy Sacrifice, the highest and the holiest thing that heaven and earth possesses, to present

ourselves to the King of the universe and to His universal Heir, in order to obtain a share of His Kingdom, of His graces, and of His infinite riches—without first having well informed ourselves of the great things that take place during the most exalted rite of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! Can such a thing be possible? That we may better know what we are doing, the Church has inserted a page from the Gospel in every Holy Mass, which, at least on all Sundays and holy days of obligation, she has the priest read and explain to the people in the vernacular. Before she gives us the Savior the Church wishes to impress upon us anew who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and what He requires of us.

The Creed

The Creed is the public and solemn profession of the Faith. Its text was not made known to the catechumens of early times until they had been tried and approved. For more than three centuries the Apostles' Creed alone was in use. Then in the fourth century a more explicit statement of belief, the Nicene Creed, was formulated against the errors of the time, and it is this creed that is recited in the Mass.

The Nicene Creed is as follows: "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by Whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven. *And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary: and was made man.* He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father: and He shall come again with glory, to judge the living and the dead: and His kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who, together with



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THE CREDO

“And Simon Peter answered Him: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and we have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.’”
(John 6: 69, 70.)

the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified: Who spoke by the prophets. And one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. And I expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

We now have the beautiful picture of the Savior before our eyes. The priest devoutly kisses the page of the Gospel that speaks to us of Jesus and forthwith he publicly and solemnly professes his faith: *Credo*—“I believe!”

Credo!—The Savior draws near. Soon He will be in our midst. Hence it is up to us to hasten to meet Him, to follow the sublime mystery of the Mass with greatest devotion. At no time is it more fitting than now joyfully to send to Jesus that beautiful greeting of our faith. Indeed, it is a real necessity for the believing soul now to exclaim in jubilation: “My Lord and my God, I believe in Thee, I believe in Thy word, and in this faith I will live and die!”

Credo!—What a glorious word! How impressive, how sublime it rings out in this hour, in which we are soon to see the modest little Host held aloft between heaven and earth by the consecrated hands of the priest, in which Holy Church calls out to us: “Drop upon your knees and adore! Under these unpretentious and lowly appearances your God has concealed Himself.”

Credo!—With what joy the heart of a Catholic must throb when he hears this word, now that he is still under the influence of the mighty wonders of which he has just heard, of the sublime teachings and the glowing examples of Jesus.

In the Gospel Jesus has just spoken to us of the kingdom of heaven; and He has likened it to a grain of mustard seed, to a pearl found again, to an extraordinary

catch of fish. And if the Savior tells us that, then it must be so. *Credo!*—I believe!

Should we meet with a cross in life, He has furthermore told us, we must take it upon ourselves with patience and resignation, if we would be His disciples. Therefore, in order to follow the Savior we must carry His cross after Him. *Credo!*—I believe!

Then He spoke those heartening words which tell us that not for the sake of the just did He come down upon the earth, but to seek and to save sinners; that there is greater joy in heaven over one sinner who does penance than over ninety-nine just; that He has given the Church power to forgive us our sins, and that not only once, nor seven times, nor seventy times seven times, but over and over again. Therefore, in His goodness and love Jesus is ever ready to forgive us. *Credo!*—I believe!

By word and example Jesus has taught us glorious virtues and has promised great rewards to those who accept His teachings with a good and willing heart, who love Him and follow His example. Therefore, man's true nobility lies in virtue and man's true happiness in the attainment of heaven. *Credo!*—I believe!

The priest read only a page from the holy Gospels, but the profession of faith must embrace the whole Savior: His divine Person, His teachings, and His works. Hence the Nicene Creed, which the priest, also in the name of the people, recites during the Mass contains various truths of our holy religion, from the generation of the Word to everlasting life at the end of time.

With the burning torch of this faith in hand, the faithful Christian can now surely and safely follow the mysterious trend of the Holy Mass. He at once clearly recognizes the Savior,—sees Him where the unbeliever sees nothing. Faith enables him actually to assist at the

real Sacrifice of Calvary, which for many is only a pious legend and lies buried in the darkness of the past for only too many more. Faith will give to such a Christian soul the Precious Blood of Jesus that it may make a worthy return to the heavenly Father and, through this infinite gift, pay off its heavy debts to God. Faith gives to such a soul the true Body of Christ, that it may find therein its nourishment and the source of all its strength and sanctity.

The Catholic who truly believes, calmly goes his way in the world, whereas others exhaust themselves in a wild chase after pleasures, riches, honors, and sin. He does not let himself be moved from the right path; he holds fast to the faith. With *Credo* on his lips he kneels devoutly at the foot of the cross—that symbol of faith—in order there in all silence to taste the delights of divine love. In the noble ignominy of the Crucified he finds his highest honor; and, thanks to his faith, he will one day merit the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER 7

BREAD AND WINE

AS WE have already said, man owes adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and prayer to God his Creator; but of himself he cannot fulfill these obligations in a manner worthy of the Most High; he cannot satisfy God so completely that He can have nothing more to desire. Between God and man there is an immeasurable distance, first of all and chiefly because of the nature of man—for what comparison can there be between the nature of man and the nature of God! Then there is that deep abyss, that yawning gulf which sin has made between the two, widening the distance between them still more. Never could sinful man render due satisfaction to the offended Godhead, not even were he to sacrifice himself utterly to God, not even were he to place himself upon an altar as a victim of sacrifice, not even were he heroically to let himself be bound to the faggots, there to burn as a holocaust of love, there to be reduced to a handful of ashes.

For centuries the Hebrew people offered slain victims and holocausts to Almighty God. For sixty centuries now countless pagan tribes and peoples have striven to appease God with all imaginable sacrifice—but all in vain! These sacrifices cannot satisfy Him.

That heaven and earth might be again united, that peace might be restored between God and men a Sacrifice of infinite value was necessary, the Sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God.

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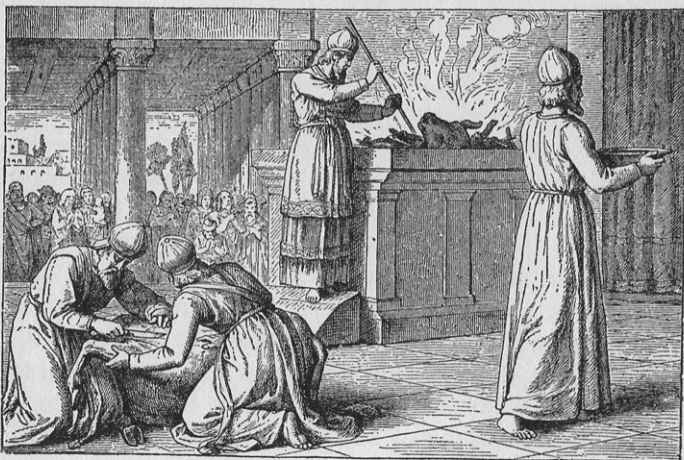
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The Gifts Are Brought to the Altar

As we already know, the Sacrifice of this spotless Lamb of God gives to God the honor and adoration that are His due; and it alone renders due satisfaction to His offended majesty. So the question might be asked: Is not



JEWISH SACRIFICE

“If his offering be a holocaust, and of the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish . . . to make the Lord favorable to him.” (Levit. 1: 3.)

man, then, entirely freed from all further obligation of sacrifice and reparation? The God-Man offers Himself! In the light of this, can the petty little offering of man now be of any value or any significance whatsoever? Can it add the least little merit to the Savior’s offering, with which we unite it?

At first thought we might be inclined to believe that we have no further obligation than to assist at the Holy Sacrifice and to gather for ourselves its precious fruits. Inasmuch as the value of the Savior’s Sacrifice is infinite,

it does indeed seem clearly impossible for man to add anything to it; it would seem to be merely a case of quietly and without more ado partaking of the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice.

Yes; it is, indeed, true that by His death upon the cross Jesus has satisfied, and more than satisfied for the guilt of mankind. But from this it does not at all follow that we ourselves need now do nothing more. On the contrary, were we to remain entirely passive, that is, were we to do absolutely nothing and take no active part at all in the Savior's Sacrifice, we would be mere automaton. But that is not the case. We are creatures, children of God, endowed with will power and freedom of action; and that is not at all in accord with the definition of an automaton, which is something like a self-moving machine or at most a living being without active intelligence. It is, in fact, especially now that we must do for God all that lies in our power; and, though what lies in our power be but insignificant and small, we must yet unite it with the great and mighty things that Jesus has done for us. Our poverty requires that. Justice demands it.

Our working should, so to speak, be melted together and thus intimately united with the working of Jesus. In the Savior's Sacrifice God should behold the infinite merits of His Son and at the same time some merits of ours; for it is a law of Divine Providence and of election by grace that by our works we should co-operate with the works of Christ.

In his Epistle to the Colossians (1:24) St. Paul expressly declares: *Adimpleo ea, quae desunt passionum Christi, in carne mea.*—"I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh." Christ's passion is still incomplete inasmuch as all the

sufferings of all the elect unto the day of judgment, unto the death of the last just man, are still wanting for its completion. With a love all divine the Savior looks upon as His own the sufferings we bear with patience and resignation. With His grace He sustains us in our sufferings; and He gives us an everlasting reward.

Because of that same reason the works of Jesus are not yet finished; for with that same divine love He looks upon our good works as His own and supports them and gives them eternal reward. And, in union with His own merits, He graciously makes use of the merits of our sufferings and good works for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. His love makes us fellow soldiers in the battle and co-heirs of His unspeakable glory.

O truly wondrous transformation! All that we do is most intimately united with what the Savior does. Even in Holy Mass, the Savior's adorable Sacrifice, we may say that a tiny bit of our own poor merits is also included.

It is, indeed, quite evident that of ourselves we cannot make any sacrifice of value in the eyes of God; we cannot offer Almighty God anything that corresponds to His sanctity. And hence it is that the only way open to us is to take part in the Sacrifice of the Mass. But how? By shedding our blood? By consigning our body to sacrificial flames? No! that were shocking barbarity and entirely useless. God would be as little appeased thereby as our sins would be blotted out.

So nothing else remains for us than to place ourselves upon the altar stone in union with the immaculate Lamb of God, in other words, nothing else than there to unite our flesh and blood with the Savior's Flesh and Blood and to sacrifice it to the Most High.

But is that really possible? Yes. And that takes place when we let our flesh and blood be mystically transformed in Jesus—into the Flesh and Blood of Jesus! Of a truth, a thing great and mighty! And this wondrous thing begins at the Offertory, at the offering of the bread and wine.

Having reached the Offertory of Holy Mass, we offer a little bread and wine to the almighty and eternal God. Also in the name of the faithful were these two modest gifts brought to the altar; and there they are likewise offered to God in our name. At the Offertory we are, in a way, inclosed and represented by the little bread upon the paten and the small quantity of wine within the chalice. No; this is not merely imagination; it is a fact.

Just reflect for a moment. If we partake of bread and wine they are assimilated and changed into our flesh and blood. But now, since the bread and wine of the Sacrifice are changed into the Savior's Flesh and Blood at the Consecration, our flesh and blood, represented by its nourishment, by bread and wine, is as a result most intimately united, so to say, with the Flesh and Blood of Jesus.

This most appropriate material offering given by us to the Almighty will be accepted by Him with great pleasure. And then He will not suffer Himself to be outdone in generosity. A little while, and He will give us this bread and this wine—which constitute bodily nourishment—as a gift in return for ours. But—O miracle of omnipotence!—it will then be no longer bread, no longer wine; the almightiness of God will have changed them into the food of our souls. They will have become the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ.

The Offertory

The Offertory was originally a whole psalm, which was chanted while the people walked up to the sanctuary with their offerings. The Offertory, as an *act*, is accomplished as the priest offers the bread and wine while reciting the prayer: "Receive, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless host, which I, Thine unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for my countless sins, trespasses, and omissions; likewise for all here present, and for all faithful Christians, whether living or dead, that it may avail both me and them to salvation, unto life everlasting. Amen." And for the wine: "We offer unto Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching Thy clemency that it may ascend as a sweet odor before Thy divine majesty, for our own salvation, and for that of the whole world. Amen."

From the Offertory to the Consecration the priest again and again beseeches God the Father graciously to accept the offering of bread and wine. From one point of view this offering is more worthy than we; it is pure, whereas we poor sinners have stained ourselves with sin; our flesh and blood is infected with sin.

Hence the priest relies firmly upon the goodness and mercy of God and perseveringly beseeches Him graciously to accept the offering.

The Offering of the Bread

Now the priest raises the paten aloft. The bread—the pure, white host—lies upon it. And he calls upon the Lord as the holiest of Fathers, the almighty and eternal God, and begs of Him graciously to receive this spotless host which he, His unworthy servant, offers to Him, his living and true God, for his countless sins, trespasses and omissions; and likewise for all who are present and for all faithful Christians, whether living or dead, that it may avail both him and them to salvation, unto life everlasting.



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THE OFFERTORY

“In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to Thy Name a clean oblation.” (Malach. 1: 11.)

Then the priest raises towards heaven the chalice which contains the wine and beseeches the clemency of the Lord that the chalice of salvation may ascend as a sweet odor before the divine majesty, for our own salvation and for that of the whole world.

It is quite impossible with few words to give expression to a greater abundance of Christian thought and feeling. Think of everything that is here included, of everything that is prayed for in the few brief moments of the Offertory! Here we see uncounted treasures of blessings and graces before us. Only the great value of our offering can explain and justify the greatness of our petitions; the whole of man, as we have just explained, is comprehended and represented in this bread and wine. But it is at the Consecration that our offering takes on its highest, its divine value; it is there that bread and wine are changed into the God-Man's Flesh and Blood.

Encouraged by this twofold value of the offering, the priest, full of trust in the divine mercy, beseeches God to pardon his sins. With every word and action that brings him nearer and nearer to the Consecration he understands better and better the exalted dignity that is his in the adorable Sacrifice, but likewise ever more and more how great is the burden of his sins. Hence his repeated cry for mercy and pardon.

Then comes to him a sense of the great responsibility of the office with which he is empowered. He sees the extensive field of his activity, sees the immense throng of those present and those who are absent, the living as well as those who have died during the centuries past, all of whom pray with him, and await his Sacrifice—and for all of whom he must pray.

An unspeakably beautiful hour this! What is happening here anyway? Priest and people! The priest

and all humankind! The priest and the departed of all times! Yes; the whole of the Church suffering and the Church militant is at this moment gathered round the altar, in order to offer to the omnipotent God sufferings and temporal life and to beg eternal life in return. To offer time, short, fleeting time, and to receive eternity in exchange—what boldness that! Yes, it were indeed boldness, rashness even, if the Church had not commanded us so to act, so to pray. And the Church would never have commanded it, had she not known that God finds His pleasure therein.

If only mankind would understand how great is the Lord and how easy it nevertheless is to offer Him a gift that gives Him joy! Ah! if only all knew with what magnanimity and generosity the almighty God is prepared to reward us for our simple offering—a little bread and wine!

But alas! many Catholics have no appreciation therefor. It is sad but true: they pass their churches and altars with the same ignorance or indifference with which uncultured aborigines pass their rivers that bear gold dust along, their mountains intersected with veins of gold, their fields wherein diamonds lie hidden. Indeed, such would not even consider it worth their while to stoop down to pick up a rare gem, much less go out of their way to get it.

The Mixing of Water With the Wine

Now we come to a rite that consists of only a few words and a simple sign of the cross; but it is none the less deserving of special consideration, since it teaches a beautiful and important lesson.

Immediately after pouring the wine into the chalice the priest adds a few drops of water, at the same time

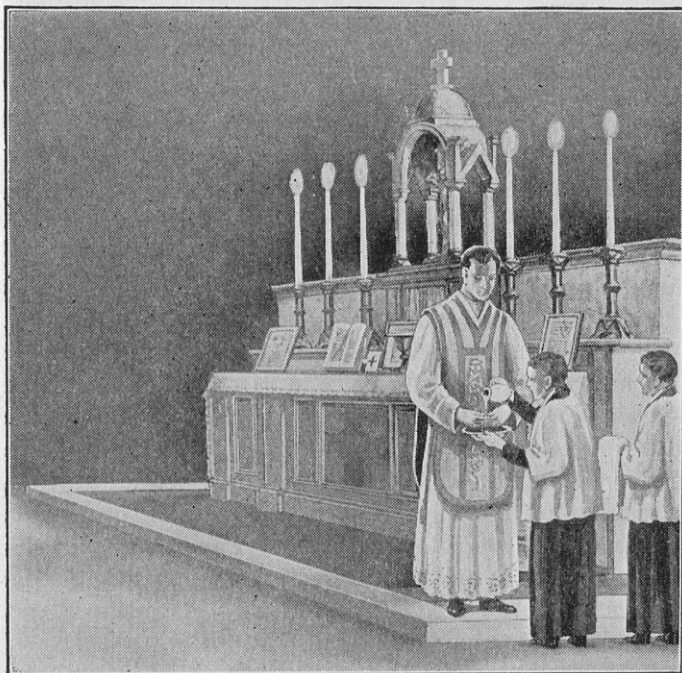
saying a short prayer. He beseeches God by the mystery signified in the mingling of this water and wine to grant us the grace to have part in the Godhead of Him Who has vouchsafed to share our manhood, namely, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

These few drops of water are, therefore, a representation. At the very moment when they fall into the wine they are mingled with it in such a manner and become so perfectly one with it, that no chemist, even were he to employ all his skill and science, could possibly disunite the two, or restore them to their former separate condition. Their molecules—smallest portion of an element—are so blended together that now they form but one and the same thing. And, therefore, they will always and inseparably share in the same fate. At the Consecration the wine is to be changed into the Blood of Christ—and hence together with the wine the few drops of water that have just been poured into the chalice.

This is a telling illustration of the perfect and indissoluble union of the divinity with the humanity of Jesus through the Incarnation of the Word; and, according to the prayer of the Church, it is likewise a touching symbol of the union of Jesus with all Christians and especially with every single one who assists at Holy Mass; for the priest petitions the heavenly Father to unite our poor human nature so closely with the divinity of Jesus that nothing may ever be able to separate it. And even as these few drops of water lose themselves in the wine, so may also we lose ourselves in the divinity of Christ.

The Mass, in very truth, is and will ever remain the Christian's great and wonderful prayer—a prayer at one and the same time touching and exalted. We remind God of our faults and sins and simultaneously approach Him with prayers and petitions which no mortal man

and no religion throughout all the preceding centuries would have dared to present to Him. To admit a heavy burden of guilt and in the same breath to ask to partake in the divinity—who would have the courage to do that?



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THE LAVABO

“I will wash my hands among the innocent: and will compass Thine altar, O Lord.” (Ps. 25: 6.)

And yet we Catholics have this privilege; it is reserved to us who assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Lavabo and the Prayers That Follow

The Lavabo is the second half of psalm 25. While reciting it the priest washes his hands. When the people had made their offerings

in kind, i.e., bread, wine, fruits, etc., the priest's hands were perhaps a bit soiled. Practical reasons would thus require an ablution. And, of course, the external washing symbolized the inward purity expected of God's minister at the sublime Sacrifice. Feeling his unworthiness, the priest turns to the people imploring them to pray that "my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." To which they answer through the server, "May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands to the praise and glory of His Name, both for our benefit and that of His holy Church. Amen."

The priest realizes the greatness of this prayer and its far-reaching effects. One would think that he must be crushed by a hope so mighty and of such weighty consequences. Bent low over the altar of Sacrifice, he now implores the Most Holy Trinity graciously to receive his gifts. He protests that he is offering this oblation not only for himself and for the faithful, but also in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honor of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, of blessed John the Baptist, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of all the saints, that it may be available to their honor and to our salvation; and that all those who are in heaven and whose memory we celebrate here on earth may vouchsafe to intercede for us before the throne of the Most High. The priest hopes that his prayer, thus strengthened by the Savior Himself, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of all the saints, will be answered the sooner and the more surely.

Throughout the whole Mass there is in the priest's soul a struggle, as it were, between the consciousness of his own unworthiness, nay, his very nothingness in the eyes of God, and the magnitude of his prayers and hopes and desires. He cannot rid himself of the fear that he may not be heard. Hence, again and again, the urgent prayer that the Lord may receive this Sacrifice at his hands and

that He may graciously show that He is pleased therewith.

He also turns to those who are present, with the request that they join their prayers with his. *Orate fratres!* "Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours may be well pleasing to God the Father almighty." At once the devout faithful accede to his request and express to the priest the fervent wish that the Lord may receive the Sacrifice at his hands, to the praise and glory of His name, to our own benefit, and to that of all His Holy Church.

The Secret Prayers

The Secret was originally the one prayer of oblation recited by the priest over the bread and wine he was to consecrate. It is said inaudibly, for here the priest is acting as a mediator speaking directly to God on behalf of man.

Thereupon the priest, in the name of the faithful, as usual, whom he also represents, recites the *Secreta*, the secret prayers, so called because they are said in a low whisper. In number and content these correspond to the collect of the Mass, said before the Epistle and beginning with *Oremus*. In these *Secreta* the priest beseeches God graciously to accept the offerings that rest upon the altar and in return generously to enrich those present with choicest graces and blessings, to help them all to grow ever more and more in holiness of life, to persevere in His love, and then one day to receive them into everlasting bliss.

The secret prayers are nothing else than a brief, condensed repetition of the Offertory. But they bear the imprint of a light heartache, so to speak,—serene, yet touching. They are the yearnings of hope and charity for that home eternal where the heavenly Father's many

mansions are—the gentle complaints of a heart that fears and trembles amidst the storms and stress of this earthly pilgrimage—a loving remembrance of the saints, mingled with quiet regret still to be separated from these best friends of ours—an anxious cry for help, that God may have mercy on us and free us at length from the trials and troubles of this world—yes, they are the cry of souls that wander in exile in this vale of tears and having at last arrived at the gates of heaven rap for admission and beg of the Bridegroom to let them in and to summon them to the marriage feast of everlasting love.

CHAPTER 8

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS!

WE WERE created for God and His heaven. Hence it is that deep down in our hearts, hidden though it may be, there is a yearning for the supernatural life, a longing for God. Alas that men so often disregard this prime necessity of their nature, that they so rarely give this their divine calling time and opportunity to bud and bloom for heaven! The noise and bustle of the world, and the added confusion of human passions, only too often stifle the soul's innermost and noblest aspirations.

But give a man a chance to recollect himself in the peaceful retirement of devout prayer—or let him taste for a time the heavenly silence so good for souls that radiates from the tabernacle's shadow—or let some crushing misfortune forcibly remind him that he is a follower of the thorn-crowned Christ: ah! all unconsciously will he lift up his heart to heaven then, and his true vocation will strikingly come home to him; namely, to adore and to praise the greatness and the omnipotence of the Lord.

Singing the Praises of God

Ah yes; what a happy lot this: to sing the praises of God and to be a citizen of heaven! Who is there that has not already felt within himself the exalted dignity of the end for which we were created? Indeed, is there a man anywhere who knows not what it is to yearn for that Being in Whom alone the human heart finds perfect rest?

Sanctified by God's grace, human nature looks upon itself as of a nobility too great to be wholly satisfied with the perishable things of time. The harp that creation and redemption places in the hands of man is something so delicately attuned and so sweetly toned and harmonious withal that it can not be thought of as vibrating merely with the mournful and melancholy strains of



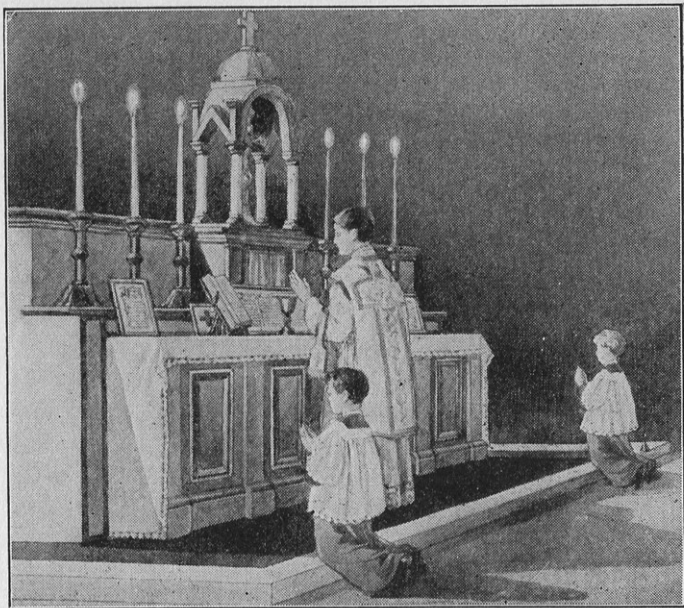
DAVID SINGS THE PRAISES OF GOD

“Sing ye to the Lord with praise: sing to our God upon the harp.” (Ps. 146: 7.)

earth. Such an instrument demands other lays; it wants the songs of the angels, the melodies of paradise!

Of course, it is quite possible to forget this truth about man's final end, to deny it, or even to combat it. But the hour shall come when truth will demand its rights

and celebrate its triumphs. Yea, verily, the day shall certainly come when the soul will just naturally strive once more to direct its flight upwards and to find lasting rest in the bosom of its God.



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THE PREFACE

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me
bless His holy Name.” (Ps. 102: 1.)

The Preface

The Preface, or introduction to the Canon, is a hymn of thanksgiving and praise. It is preceded by an invitation to the people to raise their hearts to God, and ends with the words of the seraphim: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory” (Isaias 6: 3), and the shouts of triumph upon the

occasion of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest" (Matt. 21: 9).

Priest and people are now united in devout prayer. Mind and heart are full of heavenly things. The thought—the feeling—of eternity permeates us more and more; the more recollected and persevering our prayer, the more interior and powerful that feeling becomes. But a few moments ago heaven seemed so far away and so strange. And now it seems as though its golden gates are thrown open before our very eyes; and we seem to hear a voice inciting us to take part in the songs of angelical choirs. And rightly so! Or are we not also called to enjoy rest and peace with the angels and saints of heaven for all eternity? Or has God perhaps created us for something else than to be with Him forever and sing His praises and extol His glory? May we not compare our earthly existence to a censer, chosen by God to swing to and fro before His throne? Then why not unceasingly sing the praises of God with the angels of heaven? Why not unite our voices with theirs already here upon earth?

These thoughts are in perfect accord with the sentiments of priest and people. Their hearts are filled with homesickness for the Father's house, where the many mansions are. Indeed, this homesickness for heaven secretly creeps into the hearts of all men; but it is suppressed by many; and many more seek to deaden the dull pain in a giddy whirl of frivolity, plunging themselves headlong into the distractions of a world that will not pause and think within the heart. Therefore: *Sursum corda!*—"Lift up your hearts!" is the priest's earnest exhortation. "Our hearts," the people answer, "we already have them lifted up to the Lord"—*Habemus ad*

Dominum! 'Tis well then, brethren, let us all join our voices in praise and thanksgiving unto God. Yes; let us praise Him and thank Him; for it is truly meet and just that we do so.

Convinced that he is voicing the innermost sentiments of all those present, the priest turns to God in the name of the whole assemblage and solemnly declares: "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, for us, at all times and in all places, to give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God." . . . With these words the Preface of the Mass begins.

Man's fallen nature, led astray and corrupted by ignorance and passion, only too often lets itself be enmeshed by the deceitful nothingness of this earth, even lending its approval to what is positively sinful. But at the altar he gets his bearings once again and then steers straight for his ultimate goal: God and His heaven. He proclaims that it is truly meet and just and salutary to offer unto God the tribute of our adoration and thanksgiving in song and jubilation. It is a profession that spontaneously springs to the lips from a believing heart.

Happy the Christian who gives ear to the voice of gratitude. Blessed the man who knows how to be thankful and who perseveres in his thankfulness. But, sad to say, there are multitudes of men who have not a spark of gratitude towards God, their greatest benefactor, and who only blaspheme His blessed name. But at the altar justice is done to the Most High. There the flood of blasphemy that dares ascribe deceit and crime to the Omnipotent is halted and hurled back, even as raging waves by a mighty cliff. There God is reputed for what He is; there the omnipotent Creator is shown the honor due to His divine majesty; there due thanks are given Him.

O man, you poor, pitiable creature, you handful of earth! Prostrate yourself in the dust before the Most High; for it is but meet and just—*vere dignum et justum est*.

Always and Everywhere

We now come to the consideration of the two words *semper et ubique*—"always and everywhere."

Ought not the life of every man to be a ceaseless song of praise and thanks—the praise of God in the toil and trouble of each wearisome day, a song of praise and thanks in the vicissitudes of each passing year with its full meed of joys and its still greater burden of sorrows, a song of praise in the hour of sickness and upon the bed of death? Everything comes from the hand of God. Life has not a moment that does not call for thanks.

To whom does eternity belong, if not to God? And by rights greater still does the short span of your earthly life, O Christian, belong to Him! Throughout the ages of eternity the angels sing hymns of jubilation to their Creator. Ought not we, then, poor pilgrims of earth, creatures even as they, only of a lower order, unceasingly praise and bless the Most High?

If we would but take this *semper*, this *always*, a little more to heart, our life would not be so full of lost days and years—truly gone forever because they were not used for heaven or, what is worse, because they were used for the sins that exclude from heaven. It cuts one to the very heart to see how souls endowed with a nature generous and noble, souls created for piety and virtue, let themselves be carried away by the frivolities of the world—lose themselves in the vanities and follies of worldly life—grow prodigal of their strength in their mad efforts to acquire or retain but a handful of earth—become

weaker and weaker without giving the least thought to their Lord and God. How deplorable such a squandering of life! How much light and warmth they might have scattered around them! And what influences have they left behind them—for good or for evil?

And what are we to think of those Christians who have unfortunately discovered the art of killing time? of those who sacrifice the greatest and the best part of their time to their own notions, caprices, and pleasures and, as they affirm, give the rest (little enough it is) to God? And, to hear them boast about that little, one would think they had done something great for God! With many a sigh and much pretense, and grudgingly at that, they devote a few minutes to prayer, to the Sacraments, or to the practice of this or that virtue—which, however, may not demand exertion or sacrifice. Most of their time is devoted to pleasure-seeking, to the art of pleasing others, and to dangerous, deadly, forbidden lusts. In short, time is used in order to offend God, in order to forget Him. And yet such believe, and even maintain, that they are good Catholics and are fulfilling their duties towards God. The heart is filled with pain and pity when one meets Catholics such as these.

Arouse yourselves, then, you Christians! Attend at Holy Mass to that simple *semper*, to that *always*, of the Preface. Meditate on it; enter deeply into this salutary thought. Were all to do that how different would be the aspect of faith and morals in the world.

Man's Sacred Duty

Here on earth time and space go hand in hand. *Semper* and *ubique* are closely united: "Always and everywhere."

Every moment of life and every part of the earth must

conduce to the honor and glory of God. Even if man could, according to the Prophet's splendid figure of speech, take wings and fly to the uttermost bounds of the earth, even if he could descend into the deepest abysses, deeper than the firmament above, and lose himself therein, he would none the less meet God there. Everywhere it is man's sacred duty to praise and bless God.

What are we, then, to think of those many Christians who want to show that they are good Catholics as long as they are at home and in their home town, among friends and acquaintances, and who indeed seem to give glory to God under these circumstances, but who appear to know nothing at all about their religion as soon as they get into a strange environment, but then act as though they would lose their reputation were they devoutly to hear Mass in a Catholic church? Or what are we to think of those who are truly loyal and good and virtuous Catholics in their home parish, but who are so completely blinded by the dazzling lights of the great city that they place the Lord God outside the door of their conscience? Are our duties towards God perchance of this kind here and of another kind elsewhere?

And what are we to say of you, questionable Catholic, who conduct yourself in speech and habit as a genuine Christian when in the family circle, between the four walls of your home, but who, when position or business or politics come into question speak and act in such a way that one really finds it hard to say whether the law book of your faith is the Gospel, the Talmud, or the Koran?

What have you made out of your God anyway? You have taken Him down from the omnipotent throne of His glory and have made of Him a subordinate Ruler—a plaything Who must march from one end of His kingdom

to another in a single day; Who had faithful subjects yesterday but to-day must stand for everything; Who has been dethroned and lives among strange people that do not acknowledge Him as a Ruler at all, or even among His bitterest enemies, who persecute Him with fiendish hate.

Everywhere: Our Missionaries

It is meet and just that God be always and *everywhere* adored. It is exactly this that fills you with a spirit of holy heroism, O missionary of the Most High, just this that urges you over the burning sands of the desert and through the deep forest and the tangled jungle; that causes you to shrink from no sacrifice, to pause for no obstacle; that gives you the courage to tear yourself away from your parents, relatives, and friends; that strengthens you in the bitter moment when you wave a last farewell from the ship that separates you from your native land, slowly goes out to sea, and then with quickened speed bears you to the strange land of your dreams and missionary aspirations, where a martyr's death perhaps awaits you.

Missionary, you have but one desire: to plant the cross upon soil thus far desecrated by the abominations of paganism—to erect an altar—to liberate souls from the slavery of Satan and to bring them to the service of the Lord of all—to speak to them of the greatness and the goodness of this one and triune God—to fill their hearts with fervent enthusiasm that will overflow from their lips in hymns and canticles of faith and charity and hope in the Lord. Yes, O heroic bearer of the good tidings of the Gospel, that was the dream of your youth and that will be the task of your life of noble endeavor.

But tell me, who gave you the inspiration to devote

yourself to a calling so exalted and so arduous? In what school were you taught to desire as a great good such hardships and sacrifices as these? In what school



A NATIVE PRIEST OF CHINA CELEBRATES MASS

“For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles.” (Malach. 1: 10.)

were you trained joyfully to go forth to meet martyrdom? But I already seem to hear the answer: “Holy Mass is that school. Beneath the cross, at the altar—there I learnt it.”

Yes; *semper et ubique*—“always and everywhere.” In bare little churches and in grand cathedrals you have

prayed and sung these words, O holy missionary, with all the fervor of your apostolic heart. But that was not enough for you by any means. An interior power, gently urging, drove you on to deeds of high endeavor. A voice spoke within you: "Go, fervent disciple of Christ, go and let this *semper et ubique* echo and reëcho beneath the vasty dome of the equatorial heavens—upon the silent plains of ice and snow that encircle the poles—upon the distant shores of limitless oceans—and in those unexplored wilds where from creation's dawn even unto this day naught has broken the deep silence of nature save the lion's roar or the inarticulate speech of the savage."

Thither you went! You went from wilderness to wilderness, from desert to desert, in pouring rain and scorching sun, in dangers of every description. But you were borne up by the hope that the sweet strains of the Catholic faith might captivate the souls of all men that sit in the darkness of paganism and in the shadow of death. You went forth to bring them life and light—the life and the light of faith that enlightens and vivifies.

And when you have exhausted the last ounce of your strength in the work of the apostolate, you will bless the day when, perhaps far away from your fellow apostles, in a distant land, in the shelter of some poor tent, all alone and abandoned, you breathe forth your soul, while your lips labor to utter a last broken prayer, so softly, softly that only God can hear it: "O God, almighty and all good, Thou hast chosen me to spread the glory of Thy name, and gratefully I have listened to Thy voice and gladly followed Thy call. . . My work is done. . . I must die. . . But see, to these many, many good souls I leave the harp of my faith . . . they in my stead will sing triumphal songs of Thy greatness and Thy glory even unto the most distant centuries yet to come."

Catholic people, be loyal and faithful always! At the Preface of the Mass think of your heroic missionaries. Pray for them! Pray for the poor pagans! And, in gratitude for the gift of faith that has been yours from earliest infancy, take a lively interest in mission work, especially in the work of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and in the Papal Work of St. Peter the Apostle for the education of native clergy in pagan lands. Take an interest. Join the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Be glad to give all the financial assistance you can.

Yes; God must be adored always and everywhere, *semper et ubique*. Ah! when will it come, that blessed day when there will be upon earth only that altar whereon the Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated? Of a truth, that day is still far distant; but that day is sure to come. The Mass is making ever new and greater conquests; missionaries are constantly claiming new territories for Christ; and the day shall come when the whole wide world will belong to Jesus and He shall be more truly than ever the Savior of the World.

Our Mediator With the Father

To praise God and to bless Him—what a glorious task! Yet, of ourselves alone we cannot send our prayers and songs of praise to the throne of God. No; we need a Mediator, we need the Divine Savior! And so, immediately after he has announced that it is right and salutary to praise God, he adds: *Per Christum Dominum nostrum*—"Through Christ our Lord."

In these few words we find a splendid expression of the exalted significance of the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass; here we are shown the way in which our veneration most surely reaches the throne of God. Man may plead and

complain before God in accents the most pitiable and most touching: it will be of no avail unless it all passes through the Heart of Jesus; else our impetuous pleading will not really arise to God as prayer, but will be more like the distant echo of a tumultuous and storm-tossed ocean.

Why, even the angels need the Savior's intercession in order to offer their adoration to God. Jesus in heaven is the great and the only Intercessor between God and the creature: His angels and saints and us men. Loud and clear is the voice of the priest announcing this important truth in the Preface of the Mass; and thereby he himself is filled with the ardent desire to be with God in heaven above, there eternally to offer to the Eternal adoration that is worthy of Him. Are we not told in plain words in the Preface that through Jesus the angels eternally praise the infinite majesty of God, that through Jesus the Dominations adore it, that through Him the Thrones glorify it with reverent awe, that through Him the Powers, and the Seraphim, and all the array of the heavenly host unite in celebrating it with joy?

The faithful Christian is now solemnly called upon to abandon the world and all the things of sense, to unite himself with the hierarchies of heaven, and to join in the angels' songs of praise.

All unconsciously man's innate impulse to all things supernatural impels the believing soul to look up to its true home. Indeed, how could a heart that is not entirely depraved forget its Father's house? Hence the soul that loves God here directs its flight higher and higher—and in spirit now kneels before the throne of the divinity, rapt in adoration—partakes, so to speak, in the sublime feast of Paradise—sings songs of jubilation in unison with the angels and archangels.

Happy the Christian who is filled with the desire to force his way into heaven in order the better to praise the greatness of God! It is a distinction of Holy Mass for one brief moment to give to the faithful soul a foretaste of the joys that will be its portion after the time of exile in this vale of tears. The Mass fills us with holy awe; it reminds us of a right that the Savior has merited for us,—the right, in spite of our unworthiness, to stand with the holy angels at the very throne of God.

As the angels, so also we men owe our existence to the creative breath of God. As the angels, so also we are created to glorify God. Together with the angels we, too, are destined to share in the bliss of God. Is it not, then, only just and right to be of one heart and soul with our brothers, the holy angels, and together with them to praise and glorify God?

The Trisagion

No; we mortals should not hold back! The Church not only lets us ask God for permission to join the heavenly choir, but, further on in the Preface, lets us expressly ask Him to command us to join our voices with those of the angels—*ut admitti jubeas deprecamur*. Also we, His poor creatures, are to sing the “Holy, holy, holy” that unceasingly arises before the throne of God. With united powers both angels and men are to proclaim that the heavens and the earth are full of His glory. For the whole world they are to let the *Hosanna* ring out round the globe and greet Him Who is shortly to appear in our midst: “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!”

Holy Mass has not yet reached the zenith of its beauty, and still, how great and sublime it already appears to us! How good it is for man to shake from his feet the



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THE TRISAGION, OR SANCTUS

“And the multitude that went before and that followed cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”
(Matth. 21: 9.)

dust of earth, to enter into his heavenly Father's house, and to exult in the peaceful atmosphere of that true home wherein the angels dwell everlastingly.

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus! "Holy, holy, holy!" Ah, why is it that this sacred song does not everywhere strike a responsive chord in human hearts! Why is it that our Catholic people do not flock to the altars each morning, there to entone this song with the angels of God, instead of always listening to the strains of earthly music and song? The world is a field in which one everywhere stumbles upon blasphemy and sin. Come, therefore, to the celebration of Holy Mass; come and give new life to your souls that droop beneath the shameful treatment the world gives to God. Or is it not a wondrous thing to use the speech of angels in order to counteract the devilish speech of sinners and blasphemers?

"Holy, holy, holy!" This Trisagion is the ever-recurring refrain of all the songs of praise that human love sings to the Most High. Let it be one with each throb of your heart. Let it be a constant incentive to greater love of God. But in heaven above it will be a cause of eternal ecstasy to all who in this life groan beneath the burden of a heavy cross.

Sad to say, many Catholics have little or no appreciation of the sacred mysteries of our altars. When it is a question of going to Mass, they experience a feeling of annoyance and aversion. When they actually do assist at the sacred action, their greatest wish is to see the Mass come to a speedy close. Poor creatures! They understand little or nothing about the sacrifice of the cross. And what makes matters more deplorable still is the fact that they are unwilling to exert themselves in any way in order to dispel their ignorance in this regard. For such people Mass is just a dull event in

the life of man, one that they would like to avoid in order to be free and undisturbed in their chase after the pleasures and follies of the world.

O you good and pious Catholics, go to Holy Mass all the oftener, then, and all the more fervently, too. Blinded neighbors may indeed avoid you because you are devout and like to go to Mass—but it matters not. In return you have Jesus, the Son of God, the King of heaven and earth in your midst, Who here offers Himself out of love for you.

Come, O come to the altar! Here everything is noble and pure; here all is great and holy. Not as it is out there in the world among those who proudly scoff at sacred things—no, no! Your fidelity has created the desert wherein you live away from the world. 'Tis well! See, God now peoples it with hosts of heavenly spirits! God's angels descend from heaven—and that in all reality too—in order at your side to sing with you unto the Lord God of hosts the glorious *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*. "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

CHAPTER 9

THE PRAYERS BEFORE THE MIGHTY WONDER

The Canon

The Canon is the fixed and, except for a few variations on certain great feasts, unchangeable part of the Mass. It is that portion which comes between the *Sanctus* and the *Pater Noster*. In the Canon are embodied the oldest and most primitive prayers and ceremonies. As the Council of Trent declares: "It is made up of the very words of Our Lord, the traditions of the apostles and the devout institutions of holy pontiffs." (Session XXII—"On the Sacrifice of the Mass.")

A hush falls upon the congregation as the Canon begins. The priest stands with hands extended pleading and praying in holy silence. His prayers, addressed to the Father, implore the Divine blessing on the offering, on all present and on certain particular persons. Having venerated the memory and implored the aid of the Mother of God and the saints, the celebrant holds his hands spread over the bread and wine, a ceremony akin to that in the Old Law, when the priest held his hands extended over the victim he was about to offer as a sacrifice. At this moment the priest prays God to accept this oblation of our service, to dispose our days in peace, to deliver us from everlasting death, and to number us among His elect. The warning bell is sounded; the climax of the sacrificial drama is at hand.

AT THE Preface of the Mass and at the *Sanctus* we stand in spirit before the throne of God, in the very midst of angelic choirs; and with them we unite in singing here in time the "Holy, holy, holy" that we hope to sing in eternity. How gladly we would sing Hosanna to the Highest,—we, transfigured as angels. But we must still eat the bread of exile here below. How happy we would be to praise and glorify God upon the harps

of angels—but instead of that we have in our hands only bread and wine. But our hearts have already begun their flight to heaven above.

The priest now addresses the almighty and eternal God with the sweet name of Father. Bending low over the altar, he says:

“Wherefore, we humbly pray and beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, to receive and to bless these gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices, which we offer up to Thee, in the first place for Thy holy Catholic Church, that it may please Thee to grant her peace, to guard, unite, and guide her throughout the world; as also for Thy servant N., our Pope, and N., our Bishop, and for all who are orthodox in belief and who profess the Catholic and apostolic faith.”

For whom, then, does the priest offer this Sacrifice? First of all, and very especially, for our Mother, the holy Catholic Church.

In order perfectly to understand this prayer, we would have to spend some time with the Principalities and Powers of the heavenly court; for we are here face to face with something that is infinitely higher and more glorious than all the kingdoms, organizations, and institutions of earth. Here we are occupied with the most exalted, most beautiful, most powerful thing that the Savior called into being: the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church!

The Catholic and Apostolic Church

The Church! What implications there are in that word! It is the embodiment of marvelous dignity and greatness, derived from the virtues of millions and millions of souls of every state of life, of every social condition, of every age; of souls that fight bravely and

tirelessly here below for the triumph of the things of God, for the spread and preservation of the Gospel of Christ, for the victory of the spirit over flesh and blood, of humility over pride, of the love of one's neighbor over selfish egoism,—in a word, for the victory of heaven over hell. Ah, the Church! this mighty host of souls deeply imbued with faith, who throng to the altars each morning to quench their thirst at Eucharistic sources where bitter tears, forced from the eyes by the trials and tribulations of each earthly day, mystically fall into the Precious Blood, where that same Blood of Christ mystically engulfs the blood which the children of Holy Church pour forth in the torments of cruel martyrdom! The Church! this glorious institution that for twenty centuries of uninterrupted combats, sacrifices, and benefactions has extended itself ever more and more, seeking new adherents in every clime the wide world over, suffering new persecutions, celebrating new victories, gaining new glory before God and man.

When the ambassador of a powerful country calls upon a mighty ruler in order to confer with him regarding important matters of state, such an event is oftentimes of greatest consequence and concern. But behold, then, this priest at the altar. He is negotiating with the King, but not merely about earthly interests. Nay; he has heaven, everlasting happiness in his hands! He does not represent a powerful earthly kingdom. No; he represents the Church, this mighty kingdom that is greater far than all the kingdoms of earth. Think for a moment of the number of her subjects—of the vast extent of her territory—of the power of her Supreme Head—of the eternal duration of His throne. What ambassador could be anything in comparison with the priest? And the Ruler before Whom he appears is the

thrice-holy God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, to Whom all the ages are subject. What monarch upon the earth can compare with God? Catholic people, enliven your faith! Let it flare up brightly! Reflect upon this overwhelming fact. Then your gaze will see farther than the short-sighted vision of human wisdom. It will pierce the heavens and behold the kingdom of the Un-created; it will see what only the gaze of the glorified sees.

The Memento of the Living

We have come to the Memento of the living. The interest of the Church is here centered in the interests of her children. In a particular way the priest accordingly remembers all the faithful who are present. He now pauses in the prayer of the Church and recommends to the goodness of God the person—the intention—for which he is especially offering the Adorable Sacrifice. He also prays for all those who are especially dear to his heart, and those who have recommended themselves to his prayers, and all those for whom he is in duty bound to pray.

How thrilling this Memento! What a wondrous thing it is to have the power to bring the concerns and prayers, the trials and troubles of so many souls to the feet of God,—of souls that perhaps vainly seek help and comfort everywhere, but for whom in the whole wide world no other voice is raised in pleading than the voice of the priest at the altar. Great and glorious office of the Ambassador of Christ! Who can tell how many fond hopes are again renewed in these few moments at the altar! So many hidden crosses and private intentions were entrusted to the priest. He alone knows of this or that tragic suffering—of unsuspected family troubles—of agony of soul—and trials of every kind.

And all this he confidently refers to the goodness and mercy of his God. For each and for all he sends his prayer to heaven, in the firm hope that God will graciously deign to accept his petitions. Yes; he prays for the few or for the many who are present, whose faith and devotion are known to God, for all their dear ones, for the salvation of their souls, for their health and welfare, that they may attain to everlasting blessedness.

“Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants N. and N. . . . And of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee, this Sacrifice of praise, for themselves, their families, and their friends, for the salvation of their souls, and the health and welfare they hope for, and who now pay their vows to Thee, God eternal, living, and true.”

And here we cannot refrain from making a sad reflection. During the Holy Sacrifice the priest remembers, without exception, all the faithful who are present. He prays for them with all the authority of his exalted office. He prays that God may shower upon them happiness, graces, and blessings in richest profusion. And to add force and efficacy to these things, he pleads for them through the merits and the Adorable Person of Jesus Christ. And the faithful—what do they do? How many are there who, even with a single thought, identify themselves with this most powerful of all prayers? How many are there, we wonder, who are really conscious of the important fact that there is no one on earth who can better recommend their intentions to God, or who can more efficaciously secure their happiness, than the priest at this part of the Mass. Does it really occur to many that in this prayer it is actually a question of their own persons, their souls, their temporal happiness, their eternal bliss? Is this thoughtlessness?

Or ignorance? Or lack of faith? What are we to think about it?

If Catholics only had a lively faith! Then the Mass would not be for so many what it really is—a book sealed with seven seals. In holy emulation they would ardently seek for a Memento from the priest at the altar. How many would then entrust to him body and soul, and all that they are and have, beseeching him to place everything on the altar stone, beside the bread and wine, that all might be a sacrifice for the glory of God. How many would then hand over their crosses to the priest, that he might make them holy in the Blood of the sacrificial Lamb and so lighten the crushing burden. Not to egoism would they make known those heartaches, for egoism is cold and unfeeling; nor yet to hypocrites who express their sympathy in the perfunctory way that custom dictates, but whose hearts do not share in the pain of others. Full many a Catholic would then come to the realization that the priest is not his enemy, as hate and unbelief assert. No; he would then look upon him with joy as the mediator between sinful man and a just and merciful God.

CHAPTER 10

THE MIGHTY WONDER

THE prayers said in the Canon of the Mass for the Holy Catholic Church and for all the faithful, are now to be confirmed and strengthened by the intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints. Some of them the priest mentions by name; and he promises to hold them in honorable remembrance. He begs of God, through the merits and intercession of all those saints, to take and keep us all under His powerful protection.

Communion With the Saints

With outstretched hands the priest prays in the name of the people:

“Having communion with and venerating the memory, first, of the glorious Mary, ever a virgin, Mother of Jesus Christ, our God and Lord; likewise of Thy blessed Apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, and Thaddaeus; of Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmos and Damian, and of all Thy saints: for the sake of whose merits and prayers do Thou grant that in all things we may be defended by the help of Thy protection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.”

How beautiful this prayer! And its beauty is enhanced by its position here. Every step brings us nearer and nearer to Calvary's heights. We are all eager to be at the summit of that sacred hill and to stand beneath the cross of our Redeemer. Is it not a

thrilling thought,—the thought that the Mother of God and the saints are accompanying us thither! Through the intercession of these powerful friends of God our prayer will be more intimately united with the Savior's Sacrifice on the cross. In consideration of their petitions God will all the more graciously condescend to grant us assistance and protection.

We do not like to go to God all alone, with nothing in our hands but the poor and simple gifts of bread and wine,—and our prayers so lukewarm, too. But in the company of Mary, the Mother of God, and the saints, who share in the glory of Christ their Head, we may confidently draw near to God and may count on being heard; for we are then supported by their pious intercession.

How consoling it is to remember here the dogma of the communion of saints! So often we are inclined to think that we are left all alone on earth, abandoned to blind fate—alone in our struggles for existence here below—all alone in carrying the crosses of trials and sufferings—alone in our misfortunes—alone in our hopes and aspirations. But our aloneness is only imaginary. The Church's teaching regarding the communion of saints casts a bright and cheerful light upon the pathway of life. We see the saints, our dear brethren in Christ; we see Mary, our Mother most amiable; and straightway we realize that we are united with them and together form one large and happy family. Tender love unites heaven and earth. Our prayers and petitions ascend to heaven, and grace and blessings in abundance are showered down upon us here in this vale of tears.

Poor, afflicted, homesick pilgrims of earth as we are, we yet feel that we are near our glorified brethren and in the good safe-keeping of those who delight in the

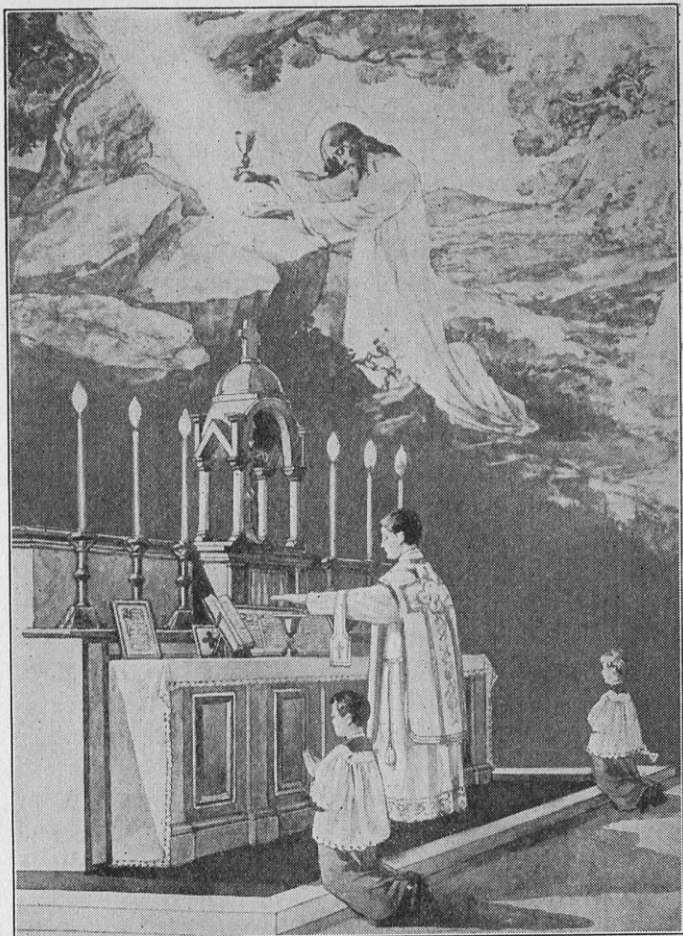
everlasting joys of our heavenly home. These blessed ones throng round the dazzling throne of their Redeemer, Who reigns forever in the glory of heaven. And we, sorely burdened children of earth, throng round the throne of the crucified Savior here on earth—round the altar throne whereon that Savior offers Himself anew in an unbloody manner in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the re-presentation of His one only, all-atoning Sacrifice: the bloody Sacrifice on the cross.

Thus assembled together round our Savior God, we may firmly rely upon the helping hand of our friends the saints, in all our temporal necessities. And not only that; we may, above all, expect them to aid us powerfully in growing in the love of God and in all holiness. The love of God! That, indeed, is for us the source of all merits, as it is for the saints their crown of eternal bliss.

Ardent Supplication

The priest is praying with the utmost fervor and devotion; yet he cannot but feel the powerlessness of his poor prayers,—prayers that beg of God such mighty graces. Hence, he supplicates God with a perseverance that one might almost call excessive, bordering on demand. He pleads with God graciously to accept the bread and wine just offered up to Him. He spreads both hands over the gifts that lie before him—and once more beseeches God to deign to receive them—and to make our days peaceful—and to preserve us from eternal damnation—and to number us among His chosen ones in heaven. Thus he prays:

“Wherefore, we beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to receive this oblation which we Thy servants, and with us Thy whole family, offer up to Thee: dispose our days in Thy peace; command



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THE "HANC IGITUR"

"My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matth. 26: 39.)

that we be saved from eternal damnation and numbered among the flock of Thine elect. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

What an abundance of thought in these few words! The priest sees, as it were, the flash of the lightning of the just anger of God, and he beseeches the Almighty to be appeased at the sight of this bread and wine—*ut placatus accipias*. He begs of Him to have a little patience still; for very soon the insignificant bread and wine will be changed into the very Body and Blood of His beloved Jesus.

How exalted this strife between sin-laden man and the offended omnipotent God! What daring on the part of the sinner who attempts to satisfy the justice of an angered God with an unpretentious offering of bread and wine! How unutterably good God must be, Who permits His wrath to be thus disarmed, and turns His glance favorably upon mankind, and forthwith dispenses benefits and blessings beyond compare!

But what do we really ask for in return for our gift of bread and wine? We ask for nothing less than three great graces,—graces that satisfy the greatest yearnings of every Christian heart and include all other graces.

That God would dispose in His peace our days of earthly exile, is the first grace we ask for. Poor mortal man, is it possible for you to desire anything better than the quiet happiness of real peace of heart? Not a day, often not an hour, but you are at war with yourself. It is a case of bridling your passions and holding them in check, of overcoming the world and the scandals thereof, of escaping the snares and the cunning deceits of hell, of beating off the assaults of the devil and putting him to flight. What a strife!

Peace! Yours is ever disturbed by the weighty, sometimes crushing cares of every-day life. What comfort, then, and what help in the prayer of the priest: *Dies nostros in tua pace disponas*—"Dispose our days in Thy peace."

"Command that we be saved from eternal damnation," is the second petition. Of a truth, this is a grace for which every man ought daily to storm heaven. Eternal damnation! With fear and trembling must we think of this terrible fate; and as long as life lasts we can never pray too much that God may preserve us therefrom. We must obtain this grace, no matter what it costs us; else our sufferings here below are but the beginning of a despairing agony in that frightful place in eternity whereof it is said, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

"Command that we be numbered among the flock of Thine elect." Thus we rap at the door of God's mercy, begging to be let into heaven and to be numbered among the vast throng of the chosen ones. Who is there that does not long to be far away from a place so full of wickedness and deceit as is this earth of ours? Who would wish to live here always? Is there a heart that does not beat quick and quicker in the hope of one day being there where all is joy, and love, and bliss, and overflowing happiness? A future of unalloyed blessedness! Who is there that does not care to know anything about it?

O Holy Mass, how wonderful, how great art thou! How refreshing it is for earth's worn and weary pilgrim to inhale thy pure and fragrant atmosphere! What a relief to be able to reach the very throne of God from the steps of thine altars! What a pleasure to be there permitted to taste of the delights that await us after

the battle of life has been faithfully fought! Thou sublime mystery of faith, why am I so indifferent in thy regard? Why, oh, why do I not learn to enter deeply into thy marvelous prayers and wondrous workings and, like unto a seraph, to lose myself in profoundest meditation of thy heavenly beauty?

The Consecration and Elevation

The Consecration begins with the faithful gathered, so to speak, in the Upper Room on the eve of Our Lord's Passion. How touchingly the scene is re-enacted! Another Christ takes bread into his hands, raises his eyes to heaven, and blesses the bread with the sign of the cross.

Now he bends low over the altar. The words are uttered by which the God of heaven and earth becomes present under the appearances of bread and wine. Before that adorable Presence he bends in love and reverence. Like sentiments inspire the people, who behold their Eucharistic King raised by priestly hands. How divinely simple; a few whispered words, and what a stupendous result.

The Elevation of the Consecrated Host and Chalice is a reminder of the Savior raised on the Cross. This ceremony made a most profound impression on the people of the Middle Ages. Their eagerness to look upon the Blessed Sacrament sometimes caused jostling. Everyone present wanted "to see Jesus." Indeed, the very attendance at Mass was spoken of as "seeing God."

In an instruction published by Pope Gregory X about the year 1275, the priest's assistants are directed to lie prostrate on the ground at the Elevation, worshipping in this wise until the Pater Noster.

The people were warned of the solemn moment by the tinkling of a little bell, while for the consolation of the brethren at home and in the fields, a great bell tolled from the church tower.

And now a last fervent prayer before the mighty wonder, before He comes! It is quite clear to the priest that a little piece of bread and a small quantity of wine cannot of themselves merit the good pleasure of God.

Therefore, he now beseeches the Almighty to condescend to work the greatest of all miracles: to change this bread into the Body, and this wine into the Blood, of His well beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

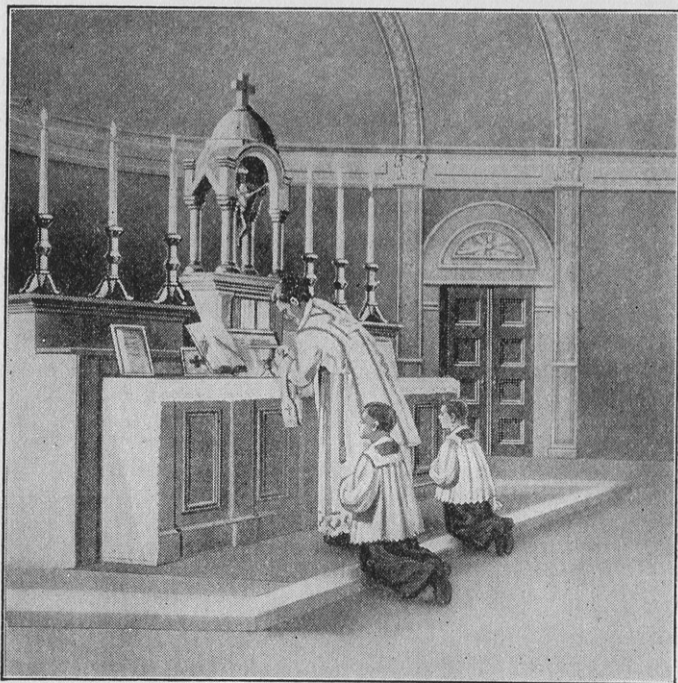
“And do Thou, O God,” he prays, “vouchsafe in all respects to bless, consecrate, and approve this our oblation, to perfect it, and to render it well pleasing to Thyself, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of Thy most beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And God grants the request. He knows that His creature has done all that lies in its power to persuade Him graciously to accept these offerings, the very best that it had for Him. And yet His divine dignity cannot be content with so little. Hence He is in a dilemma, so to speak: either He must repulse man or He must hear his prayer and work the wonder. O the incomprehensible love and mercy of our God! He does not wish to reject man's insistent pleadings, and yet at the same time He would preserve His divine dignity—the mighty wonder shall be worked!

O priest of Jesus Christ! Be consoled now and proceed further in the majestic way of divine glories and divine greatness! Only go on! Clothe yourself with the very person of Jesus Christ; forget yourself; take His place . . .

And the priest, now more truly than ever another Christ, does just that. In hushed voice he says:

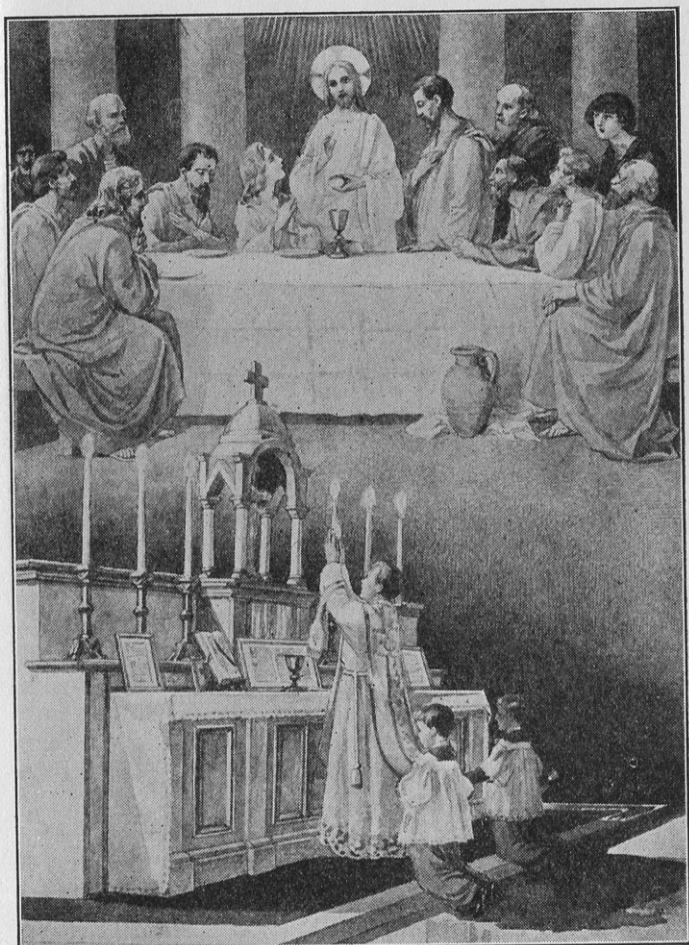
THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOST



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“Who the day before He suffered took bread into His holy and venerable hands and, having lifted up His eyes to heaven, to Thee, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take ye, and eat ye all of this.”

“For this is My Body”



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THE ELEVATION OF THE HOST

“My Lord and my God”

And then, having adored and elevated the sacred Host, the priest continues:

THE CONSECRATION OF THE WINE

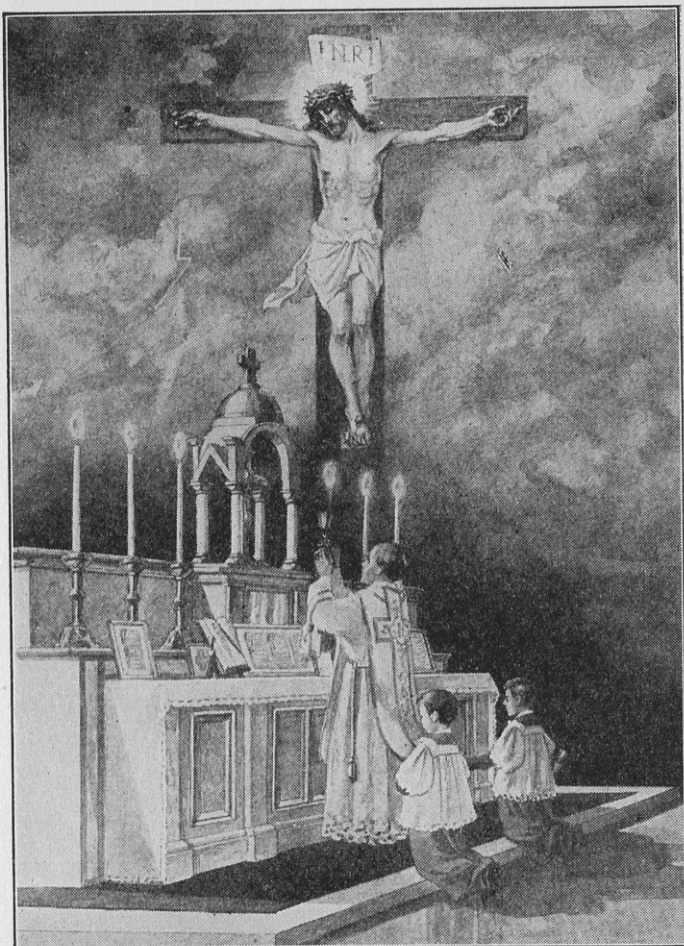
“In like manner, after He had supped, taking also into His holy and venerable hands this goodly chalice, again giving thanks to Thee, He blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take ye, and drink ye all of this.”



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*“For this is the chalice of My Blood, of the new
and everlasting testament, the mystery of
faith, which for you and for many
shall be shed unto the remis-
sion of sins.”*

And again the priest adores and then elevates the chalice.



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THE ELEVATION OF THE CHALICE

"Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, have mercy on us."

He has imitated the Savior's very actions,—taking into his hands, raising his eyes, blessing. He has spoken Christ's very words and in Christ's own name. And nothing remains of the bread and wine but the appearances only. By the power of those divine and omnipotent words their substance is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ—Transubstantiation!

Breathless silence! . . . Only the little bell at the altar announces to the assembled faithful and to the whole world that a great miracle has taken place before our eyes. The gates of heaven, as it were, open; and Jesus, surrounded by His holy angels, comes down to us upon the altar! What marvel that the priest should bend the knee in profoundest adoration!

O ye angels, and ye children of men, prostrate yourselves in holy reverence and awe before your God and adore Him! He is here present!

CHAPTER 11

BEHOLD THE BREAD OF ANGELS!

BEHOLD it there in the hands of the priest, raised aloft between heaven and earth—the spotless white Host. That Host is Jesus.

But what has happened to that bread which but a short time ago we so solemnly offered to God? According to the laws of nature its substance was destined eventually to be changed into the substance of our own bodies. And what is it that has actually come to pass? Here on the altar the omnipotence and goodness of God has changed the substance of that bread into the substance of the Body of Christ. Only the outward appearances have remained: figure, color, taste, weight—all are the same as before. For many the unchanged and continued existence of the appearances is seemingly a fact without further significance. And yet, what a touching trait of the Savior's love lies hidden therein! How unutterable the considerateness of our God!

Jesus comes down to us from heaven upon the altar; He would dwell among us, would be offered by us to the Father. And during this His Eucharistic life He desires for Himself no other garb than that wherewith we furnish Him. Yes; it is true: the white veil that now envelops His glorious humanity as with a royal robe, that white veil of the appearances of bread, we give Him through our offering. Hidden in this humble guise, He appears to us at one time in the hands of the priest, and again on the Tabor of our brilliantly lighted altars—in solemn exposition. How moving and how



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THE BREAD OF LIFE

“This is the Bread that came down from Heaven.” (John, 6: 59.)

compelling it is for the believing heart to behold the King of heaven and earth concealed beneath such lowly appearances!

And the Savior? Ah, He rejoices much because of the modest garment wherewith we clothe Him. As though to console us for our poor gift, He seems to say: "From your generous hands have I received this garment; and now, thus hidden away, I abide with you even to the consummation of the world, without frightening you by the divine splendor of My heavenly glory."

The Eucharistic Garb

With her own hands the Blessed Mother of God spun and wove a garment for her beloved Jesus. But alas! He could not long wear it. The day soon came when He had to climb the hill of Calvary; and there the cruel soldiers tore it mercilessly from His bruised and bleeding shoulders and in scorn and ridicule cast lots upon it whose it should be.

But the delicate Eucharistic garb that we give the Savior through our sacrificial gift will be worn by Him throughout all the centuries of His Eucharistic life. Never again will an executioner have the power to tear His garment from Him. What joy for us! Have we not herein a greater privilege than even His dearest Mother Mary had? And yet it is only a little piece of bread that we give Him! Another proof this, that in every sacrifice we make for God, even in the most insignificant, the advantage is always on our side. God simply does not let Himself be outdone in generosity. The little wafer of bread that we offer Him is restored to us—O marvel of the love of our God!—as living bread from heaven. The substance of bodily nourishment is given back to us changed into the Body of Christ.

The altar is the place where God and man meet, where they extend to each other the hand of reconciliation. There puny man, after centuries of enmity, becomes the lord and master of his God; he receives the Host in his hands; he shuts it up within his heart; he calls it all



JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

his own. The altar is the table whereon are signed treaties of peace between God and man. Man offers a bit of bread and wine—could any gift be more unpretentious than that? God offers His only-begotten Son—is there anything greater in heaven or on earth? The gift that man gives is next to nothing. In return he receives from

God Him in Whom are all things. And so sincere and perfect is this peace that God and man are most intimately united, become entirely one, in Holy Communion.

The Glories of Holy Mass

There is a veritable abyss of glories in the Holy Mass. Ah, if all but desired to see what takes place therein, and the very world of wonders that there reveals itself! If they would but study the history of that little white Host, in order to know whence it comes, who is it, and what it means for our poor hearts! Yes; if they only would!

And if parents would only accustom the dear little ones, still in tender years and in plastic frame of mind, to delight in going to Holy Mass; if one would but gradually, in the course of years and hence without effort, teach them to learn by heart the sublime prayers of the Mass, the very same prayers that the priest himself says, instead of so many other irrelevant prayers and things less good: ah, what a treasure parents and teachers would thus give the children,—a treasure that would be with them always as they go forth to tread the devious paths of life and one that would be their consolation in sickness and in old age!

Yes; we brought our tribute of gifts to the celebration of the Eucharistic mysteries; we brought a little bread. And God has received our simple offering with such manifest pleasure that in return He has given us the Body of His Son. To give Him that gift we, as it were, sacrificed a tiny bit of our bodily nourishment; and so pleased is He that He has given us the right now to turn to Him with the plea: *Pater noster . . . panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie*—"Give us

this day our daily bread." And for this we are going to ask very soon.

"Do This for a Commemoration of Me"

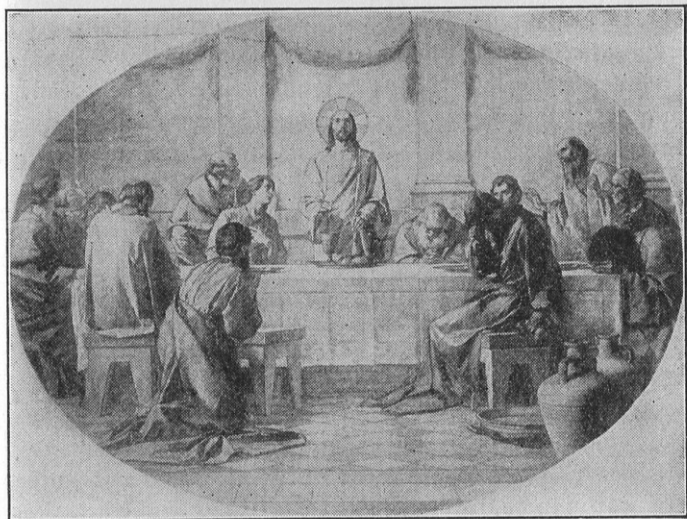
The priest and the faithful bend the knee in adoration before the Savior, hidden beneath the appearances of the Host, whereas the unbelieving remain cold and unmoved or perhaps pass by in mockery. "How can anyone believe such a thing?" they say. How can anyone believe such a thing! Listen. One can as well believe the mighty wonder of the Eucharist as any other of the Savior's words or wonders.

The holy Gospels tell us, and St. Paul clearly confirms it, that on the night before He died the Savior celebrated the Last Supper. He took bread into His divine hands, gave thanks to His heavenly Father, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, with the words: "Take ye and eat. This is My Body." In like manner He took the chalice with the words: "Drink ye all of this; for this is My Blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." And then He spoke those decisive words so full of weighty import: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*—"Do this for a commemoration of Me."

If you wish to be a Christian, and to be called one, you must believe the words of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. You may not doubt that Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples, that He then took bread into His holy hands and blessed it and said, "This is My Body," and thereupon gave it to His Apostles. So you simply cannot get around the truth that on this night the disciples really received the Body of Christ in Holy Communion.

But immediately afterwards Jesus also said: "Do this

for a commemoration of Me." Thus He gives to His Apostles the express and unmistakably clear command in remembrance of Him thereafter to do exactly what He had just done. And when Jesus gives a command He, by that very fact, likewise gives the necessary power to carry it out. Jesus is the King of kings; and every



THE LAST SUPPER

"And taking bread, He gave thanks and brake, and gave to them, saying: This is My Body, which is given for you: Do this in commemoration of Me." (Luke, 22: 19.)

king, when he issues a command gives, in virtue of that command, the power to do his will as expressed therein. It is the Savior's will—He spoke for all time to come—that His Apostles and their successors (and therefore His Church, immovably founded upon Peter, the rock) should continue to do the very same thing that He did at the Last Supper on the night before He died.

In short, by those words the holy priesthood was instituted by Christ, with the august function of changing bread and wine into His sacred Body and Blood and of distributing it to the faithful, as He had done. The priesthood—the Mass—Holy Communion: that was the Savior's last bequest to us, His parting gift on the eve of His bitter sufferings and death.

Hence it is that upon us Catholics devolves the sacred duty gladly and full of gratitude towards the Savior frequently to hear Mass, often to receive Holy Communion, and ever to treat the priest with the greatest reverence and respect, since for our sakes Jesus has made him His representative and for our sakes has given him this extraordinary power,—a power that the Church has handed down and will hand down in uninterrupted series in the Sacrament of Holy Orders until the end of time.

If the Savior's command: "Going, therefore, baptize," is true and efficacious, so also must be His words: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." Christ is always the same—yesterday, today, and forever. *Christus non dividitur*. (Christ is not divided.) He does not suffer His words to be distorted. His words are the expression of the one unchanging truth that is He Himself, the Word and the Image of the Father.

Accordingly, either all His words are true or none. In humble faith we must accept them all. There is no alternative. To accept one of the Savior's words, and to reject the other, were cowardly.

Either you must side with Jesus or against Him. You accept the Savior's other words. It is well. These words that are daily uttered anew in Holy Mass cannot in the least be questioned; they cannot be doubted, twisted out of their obvious meaning, or rejected.

If Christ's words are not true, what remains of Christianity? What else were it but fraud and deception? The veracity and almightiness of God are at stake here.

So we see that the God-Man truly gives us His Flesh and Blood, the greatest gift of His love, in order that we may have eternal life and may be raised up by Him on the last day. We know what astonishment and admiration is aroused by a man whose goodness of heart and generosity prompts him to give his blood for a friend who is hopelessly sick and who can be healed only by a blood transfusion. Such a man gives his blood to save the life of a friend.

Are we not all mortally sick,—we poor, banished children of Eve? And what has the Savior done for us in a supernatural manner? In His omnipotence and in His love He lets His Blood flow into our soul in wondrous wise, in order to make it healthy and strong and to give it eternal life. Of course, Christ works a marvelous miracle. Still, what trouble is that for a God Who called the dead Lazarus from the grave and gave him life with only one word: *Lazare, veni foras!*—"Lazarus, come forth!"

The Lowly Victim of Sacrifice

Now that the Savior, at the Consecration, has really come down from heaven to us upon earth, ought we not to summon the angels to sing their most beautiful songs, as once they did on the plains of Bethlehem? Yes, indeed! Come, gather round us, ye heavenly spirits, encircle our Savior God, sing unto Him grateful songs of jubilation! And all ye souls that are inflamed with love, come, surround Him, adore Him, show Him that there are still some hearts upon the earth that beat for

Him and that are not so utterly unworthy of Him. Come, all ye priests, ye Levites all, and swing the smoking censer before His altar here and fill His house with the sweet-smelling incense of your prayers. Speak to us of Jesus,—all of you!

And yet all are silent. What is the meaning of this? The Savior is here upon the altar, and not even the priest, the highest official of the Church, the representative of the people, has a word for Him,—not even a word of greeting. What can it mean?

In very truth, it is a fact that deserves our entire attention. The liturgy, which in Holy Mass minutely prescribes every word, every action, every movement even, immediately after the Consecration, immediately after Jesus comes down upon the altar, bids the priest again to direct his prayer to the Eternal Father. Though he has the Savior so very near to him, it is only at the *Agnus Dei* that the liturgy permits him to speak to Jesus. Why does the Church, the Bride of Christ, now bestow all honor and adoration upon the Father and not upon the Son Who is here present? Simply because in Holy Mass Jesus, though King of heaven and earth, does not appear in majesty and splendor. No; he wears a crown of thorns. He comes as the lowly Victim for the Sacrifice, offering Himself to His Eternal Father for the salvation of the world. At this time He lets the rights of His adorable Godhead be silent.—We need but consider that when a man offers someone a present, or when a priest of any religion whatsoever offers a gift to his divinity, he addresses his words, not to the gift in his hands, but to the person or to the divinity to whom he offers the gift or sacrifice. The very same is done by the priest in Holy Mass.

He offers to the Eternal Father the sacrifice of the

immaculate Lamb of Calvary. Hence he does not address himself to the Victim that lies before him on the altar, but to God the Father, to Whom he offers Him.

The Time to Offer Jesus to His Father

Therefore, O souls inflamed with Jesus' love, be patient a little while longer! It will not be long now, and you can lay your grateful hearts at the Savior's feet. A little while, and you may heed His loving invitation and approach the Holy Table of the Lamb without spot. Then you may let your hearts overflow; and then you may tell your Savior all that faith and hope and charity inspire. But that moment has not yet come. So continue to assist devoutly at the adorable Sacrifice. Contemplate the Savior hanging upon the cross, now covered with the concealing veil of the Eucharistic appearances. Contemplate the greatness and the majesty of the Father, Who is here present at the sacrificial death of His Son. Address your prayers to the all-holy God and bring unto Him the Sacrifice of His well beloved Jesus.

Now is the time to *adore* the Creator and to offer Him Jesus, the most glorious and most perfect of His works. Now is the time to *thank* your greatest Benefactor and to sacrifice unto Him Jesus, Whose worth is infinitely beyond that of all created things put together. Now is the time to *appease* the mighty Lawgiver and to offer Him Jesus, the greatest Reparation for our manifold transgressions. Now is the time to *render propitious* the Giver of all good things, to offer Him the merits of the death of Christ in order to obtain from Him the grace to serve Him faithfully on earth and to possess Him forever in heaven. This is the acceptable time in which to turn to the Almighty. The time of grace is at hand for you.

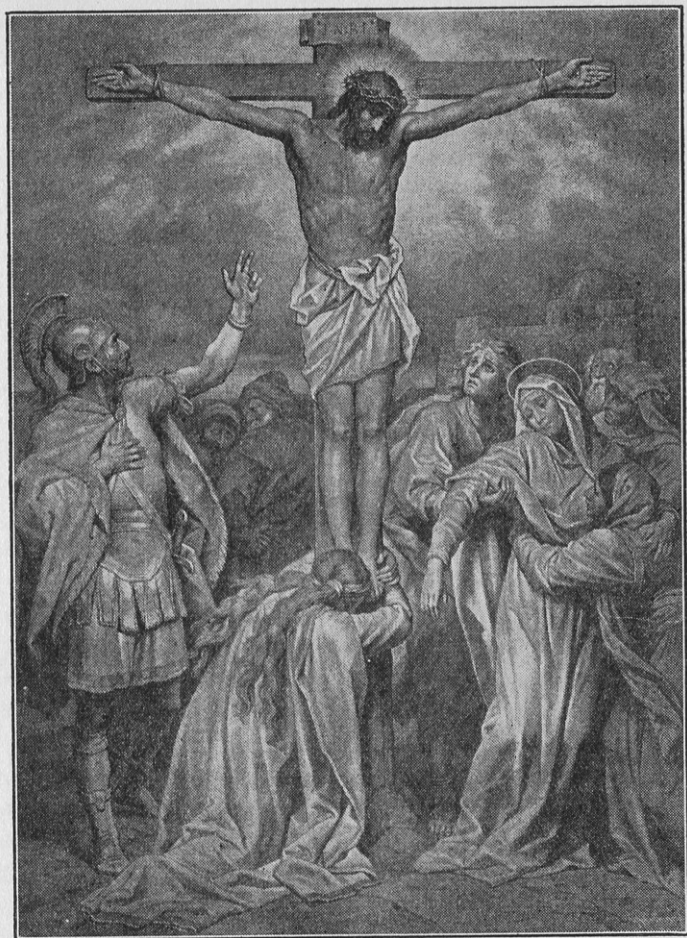
Love and Sin Meet

The infinite love of God and the terrible wickedness of sinners—these two have sacrificed the Victim upon our altar. The love of God sent the Divine Victim down upon the earth to men, and the hatred of men put Him to death.

Hence, in Jesus love and sin meet each other. In Him is fought a battle such as was never fought before. Sin exerts itself to the utmost to annihilate the love of God upon the earth; and the Savior's love seeks to banish sin from the face of the earth. Who shall win the victory? Christ is the Victor. By His death He has disarmed the justice of God and has made abundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And once sin has been put out of the way the love of God may pursue its course unhampered and may shower down and quite overwhelm the human race with manifestations of goodness and mercy.

It was sin's mighty endeavor to separate man from his God forever. But Jesus has overcome death and hell. God and man were never so intimately united with each other as through Jesus and with Jesus. Could one possibly think of a greater victory?

The stirring drama, "Divine Love in Deadly Combat With Sin," we might call it, was once enacted in a few hours on Golgotha's heights, and that in a visible manner. And in an invisible manner it is daily, hourly renewed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The divine Victim upon the altar is the same as upon Calvary. And His love and His merits today have the same infinite value in the Father's eyes as they had then. We must appreciate this supernatural truth properly, if, through the goodness of the Father, we would be victorious in our combat against the hosts of sin.



THE DIVINE VICTIM ON CALVARY

“And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.’ And saying this, He gave up the ghost.” (Luke 23: 46.)

We have often and grievously offended God in the past; we have despised His commandments; we have repaid His benefits with ingratitude. This injurious and offensive conduct must be made good. Let us hasten to the altar! Let us offer God this divine Victim in return for all the good that He has done us, in reparation for all the evil that we have done to Him.

Our duty in the present is to give God the honor and adoration that are His due. Where can we do this better than at the altar? Let us there give Him the adoration that our holy Host sends up to heaven. That is the holiest and most perfect adoration that God can wish for,—an adoration that we poor mortals would never be able to offer Him, even in a life of the greatest sanctity.

In future we must love God with our whole hearts, and serve Him with all our strength, even giving our lives for Him if necessary. But how can we do that without the help of His grace? Let us, accordingly, betake ourselves to the richest source of graces. Let us offer to God the immaculate Lamb upon the altar in order thus, through its superabundant worth, to acquire the necessary grace to live a holy life and to die a holy death.

The Altar and Mount Calvary

The altar is Mount Calvary. Here God sees His Son upon the bloody tree of the cross. He sees all the sufferings that He endured, all the satisfactions that He made, all the merits that He gained through His death. Can He turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of the human race? Can He refuse to listen to its cry for grace and pardon?

And can it be possible that there is a Christian who realizes the unspeakable value of this sacrificial Lamb

and yet passes by unmoved and unaffected? Who has a chance to restore to God the honor of which He was deprived and yet neglects to do so here at Holy Mass?

Holy Mass has this great advantage too: even the greatest sinner can assist at it and derive therefrom great good for his soul, provided he follows the sacred Action with attention and reverence; but he may not go to Holy Communion, for then he would draw down upon himself the punishments of God. It would be a mortal sin to receive the spotless Host into a heart desecrated by mortal sin. But he may offer up the Victim of the Mass to the Eternal Father; he may take Him into his hands, as it were, and offer Him to God with the priest, and beg for himself the grace of conversion. That he may do.

Surely, no one could prevent the sinner from praying thus during the adorable Sacrifice: "O great, almighty God, I have grievously offended Thee by my sins, I have caused the death of Thine only-begotten Son. But now I offer Thee the Blood of this Thy well-beloved Son for all my transgressions. O kind and merciful Father, for the sake of the infinite love and merits of Jesus, give me sorrow, heartfelt sorrow! Give me also the courage to go to the priest, Thy representative, to put my conscience in order by a sincere confession. Give me strength to overcome my passions. Give me the grace to return to the fervor, the fear of God, and the piety of the days of my youth." Such a prayer is certainly not too difficult. And who would venture to say that it will remain unanswered?

Holy Mass is the hope and the salvation of sinners!

Never, never would the sinner find the way to heaven, were he merely to cherish an empty wish to change his ways; were he simply to await a favorable opportunity

of finding a suitable confessor somewhere,—an opportunity, by the way, which indifference and human respect would ever place farther and farther from his reach; were he to rest content with an occasional superficial prayer for conversion, all the while secretly dreading lest God hear his prayer and he be obliged to lead a different life. But if for a time he faithfully attends Holy Mass and offers the Sacrifice of the altar to the merciful God in satisfaction for his sins, a change will soon manifest itself within him. He will feel how the Precious Blood of the spotless Lamb of God trickles down upon his soul as a saving dew of grace divine; he will feel how the hardness of his heart softens.

Many Catholics have a strikingly strange, often an actually demoralizing prejudice against the frequent hearing of Holy Mass. “What! go to Mass every day? No; that is something for ascetics, for spiritual souls who lead lives of piety that we cannot imitate. That is not for ordinary mortals who must live in the world, and who must work besides.” That is the way worldlings speak.

Poor, misguided, blinded Catholics, how sadly you deceive yourselves! Do you not know that God has the power and also the wish to bless you in richest measure for the time that you give to Him? and that He also has the power to withhold all blessing, all success from your work? Holy Mass is and always will be the surest way to the heart of the all-generous God; it is the very best means of pleading with God for all graces, both for time and for eternity—and of obtaining them.

Now, if Holy Mass is so necessary for good Catholics, how much more so for sinners. At Mass the good, those who are in the grace of God, receive an increase of sanctifying grace; and, though this is not absolutely

necessary for their eternal salvation, it is nevertheless of utmost importance and a very great advantage. Sinners, on the other hand, can there obtain the grace of conversion and celebrate their resurrection to a life of grace; and that is absolutely necessary for them if they would have a place among the blessed of heaven. If even good and loyal Catholics gladly and devoutly hear Holy Mass, then sinners in particular ought often and gladly assist thereat.

Sinners, gaze upon the hill of Calvary and reflect! There a thief turns in sorrow to his God and prays: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." And his prayer is heard at once. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise," was the Savior's answer. A centurion sees the Savior of the World die upon the cross. Moved by the sight, he exclaims: "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" He strikes his breast in sorrow; and from that moment on he lives a holy life.

CHAPTER 12

THE GREATNESS OF OUR OFFERING

The Prayer: "Wherefore, O Lord"

The word "Wherefore" refers to Our Lord's command, "As often as ye shall do these things, ye shall do them in memory of Me." Only because Christ so commanded does the priest dare celebrate the holy Mysteries.

IN Holy Mass all the important affairs of our salvation are touched upon. And, surely, never shall we lose courage, or give up hope of having our prayers heard, or hesitate to speak to Him about the salutary things of eternity,—no, never, if we truly know the Lamb that is sacrificed here—the sacred Host that lies upon the altar for our sakes.

Hence, immediately after the Consecration the priest prays from the Missal:

"Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed passion of the same Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, His resurrection from the grave, and His glorious ascension into heaven, offer up to Thy most excellent majesty of Thine own gifts bestowed upon us, a victim which is pure, a victim which is holy, a victim which is stainless, the holy bread of life everlasting, and the chalice of eternal salvation."

And five times, while saying this prayer, the priest makes the sign of the cross: thrice over the Host and the chalice together; once over the Host; and once over the chalice.

Three brief references—but of what mighty significance! The whole life of Christ unfolds itself before

our eyes: His passion, resurrection, and ascension, a wondrous trilogy that embraces the Savior's threefold greatness. Yes; in all His greatness He appears before us now: in the greatness of His love, in the greatness of His power, and in the greatness of His glory.

Compared to this excellence, what are the sacrifices of the Hebrews and of all other peoples combined? Our Sacrifice surpasses them all! Like a sun it puts them all in the shade, causes them almost to disappear. It alone remains—supreme. We Catholics bring unto God an offering that infinitely excels every other in perfection, worth, and holiness. And so we have every right to hope that our prayers, ennobled and enhanced and borne aloft with such inestimable sacrificial value, will be more easily and more quickly heard than any others.

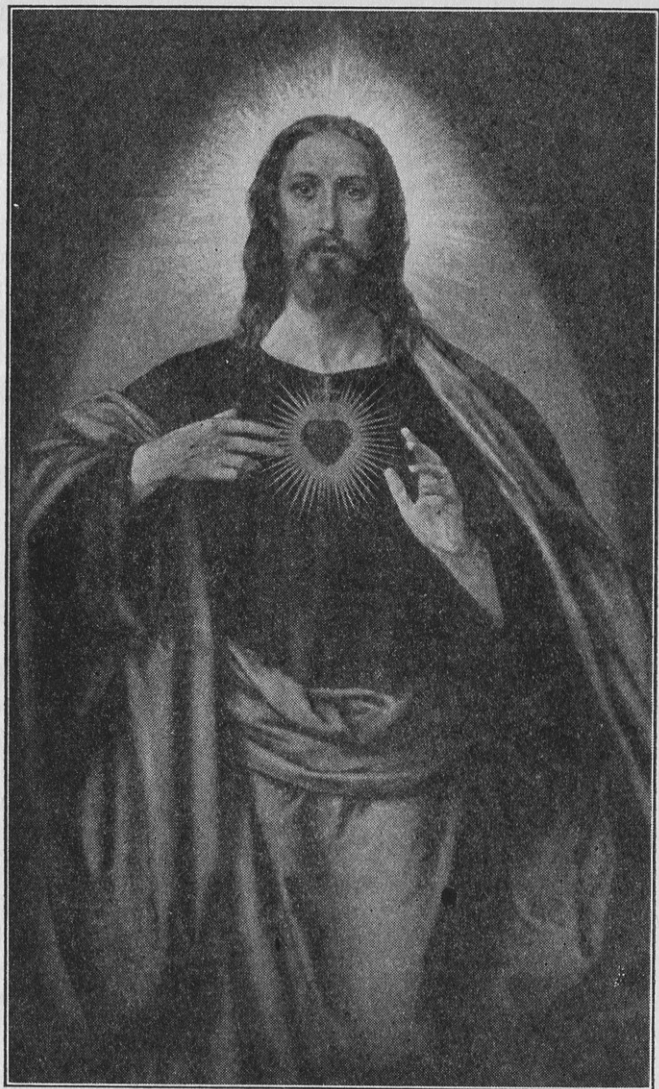
The Host Is Jesus

Let us contemplate the sacred Host more deeply. Who is it? The Host is Jesus, eternal love.

Throughout the long centuries no one will ever love man as much as will the Savior. And no heart has throbbed in such perfect love of God as has the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

After thousands of years of enmity between them the Savior took upon Himself the office of Mediator between fallen man and the thrice holy God. That reconciliation was to be perfect and was to bear the stamp of both divinity and humanity. At the very beginning He declared His readiness, as the meek and patient Lamb of God, to submit to all the blows that should come to Him from the low malice of man and the insulted majesty of an all-just God.

When, O man, will you finally realize the greatness and the gravity of your guilt? Not until you realize what



THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Praise, honor and glory to the divine Heart of Jesus

sin has done to Jesus. Contemplate for a moment your Savior on the shameful tree of the cross. Behold Him hanging there on the three nails that were so cruelly driven through His hands and His feet! Behold how the blood flows from the innumerable wounds of His tortured body—how He is the Victim of an agonizing death! Ah, at the foot of the cross you will understand, there you must understand, the meaning of the word *sin*! And you will begin to love your God, Whom your sins nailed to the cross.

And the almighty God sees how Jesus is one large, bleeding wound. He hears the plaintive cry of His dying Son and knows that He is giving His life out of love for Him, the Father, and out of love for His enemy, the sinner. And His justice is silent. Its demands are complied with. God is appeased.

The Father Appeased

The Father's heart can no longer resist. He grants His love anew to fallen man. Through the God-Man upon the cross the human race has repaired every offense and every sin and has made everything good again. In a voice almost choked by blood the Savior pleaded thus with His Father: "Most holy Father, accept all poor sinners as Thy children again; they will now love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved. Behold, O Father, I love Thee in the name of all men; for they are all My brethren."

A good father cannot forget the sufferings of a son who was snatched from Him by a painful death. But what an honor for the father if his son met that death in the heat of a battle that was decisive and victorious! And greater still the honor if he died that death in the

service of the Lord of hosts, as a martyr among savage peoples! At such honor love for his child just naturally grows greater in that father's heart.

But here it is a question of the most loving of all fatherly hearts—the heart of the loving God. Here it is a case of the bitter passion and death of His only-begotten Son. Jesus knew what infinite honor He would procure for His Father throughout all ages by His bloody death upon the cross. And in order that throughout the centuries He might continually procure this honor anew for Him, He constantly renews before His eyes the thrilling drama of Golgotha: over and over again He sacrifices Himself upon our altars for the sins of His people. And so deeply moved is the heart of the almighty God at each renewal of the Sacrifice of His dearly beloved Son that He repeatedly forgives sinful mankind anew—even though it never ceases to offend Him. For at the unbloody renewal of His Sacrifice the Savior ever pleads with Him as He did when He hung bleeding upon the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Do you now understand why Christ gave us Holy Mass?

Continually Present

Not in all eternity will God forget that bloody scene on Calvary; or we might better say, that just because God is eternal there is no such thing as time for Him, neither past nor future, and so the death of Jesus remains continually *present* to Him. He sees His Son hanging upon the cross as often as He sees the Host in the hands of the priest after the Consecration. To-day, just as of old, He sees the same Divine Victim that disarmed His justice upon Calvary and caused the flood

of divine love, held back by the mighty dam of hate and sin, to flow over the earth again. We mortals see nothing with our bodily eyes. But, as yesterday, so also today, God sees given to Him the selfsame honor, adoration, and reparation as at the death of His Son upon Golgotha.

We need but let all this be vividly present before our minds from the Consecration to the Communion in order to await with confidence God's answer to our prayers. It is to be deplored that we Catholics do not sufficiently appreciate the worth of the offering that we make to God in Holy Mass, that we do not sense the deliciously sweet odor of praise that arises from our altars to the throne of the Most High. But once we begin to realize what the Savior's bitter passion and death mean in the eyes of God, our hearts will never be wanting in spiritual light and warmth.

We have said great and sublime things about the Lamb of the New Testament; and yet our few suggestive remarks have said but little. Oh, with what brilliancy the spotless purity of the divine Lamb shines forth! It outshines all other offerings.

It is indeed true that the lambs and other animals that were offered to God upon the altar in the Old Testament were first declared legally pure through a religious rite. But in reality they were not so; for they had their origin from an earth on which rested the curse of sin. If God, in Whose sight not even the angels are without spot, is to receive an offering worthy of Himself, its purity must correspond to the purity of God.

Hence that expiatory Sacrifice to God most high and most holy can be none other than Jesus; and only Jesus, the God-Man, can remain such for all ages to come.

This the priest knows; and he knows that he gives utterance to an unassailable truth when, mindful of the Savior's bitter passion and death, he says to the Eternal that he brings unto Him a Host which is pure—*Hostiam puram*.

At this point of the Mass prayers we may not forget the intimate connection between the purity and the passion of Christ. Purity and the cross. . . . Innocence and atonement were united on Calvary; and each morning they meet again in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. So, too, do they meet each other in countless souls that live on the Eucharist and for the Eucharist.

On the hard wood of the cross, in unspeakable pain, the innocent Son of God satisfied for the sins of the children of men. In imitation of Him thousands and thousands of virginal souls have voluntarily condemned themselves to lives of severe penance. In the solitude of a narrow cloister cell, in much deprivation and many a cross (on just so many Golgothas, as it were), they endeavor to make reparation for the sins of the whole world, hoping and praying that the merciful God will cast a glance of grace upon those that now crucify Him anew.

That sacrifice, hidden from the eyes of the world, offered to God by innocent souls, is also, though not in the same strict sense as the Mass itself, a continuation of the Sacrifice of the cross. Two sacrifices, the one inspired by the other! On both one and the other there rests a supernatural glow of heavenly beauty.

Christian soul, when you see the lovely whiteness of the Host in the hands of the priest during Holy Mass, then think of its spotless purity. And reflect that it bloomed so fair for the cross alone, this wondrous, spotless lily!

The Greatness of His Power

After the greatness of His love comes the greatness of His power; after the bitter Passion comes the thought of His glorious resurrection.

The risen Savior is an offering that is unique, indeed. He alone had the power to lay down His life in sacrifice and to take it up again as a life exceedingly more perfect—immortal, impassible.

Except within the Catholic Church, there is nowhere a sacrificial gift that can be offered repeatedly upon the altar. Handed over to death, the victim elsewhere either serves as food or is delivered over to the flames or is left to corruption.

Abel slaughters choice lambs of his flock and burns them; Noe selects animals from the ark, kills and consumes them; Abraham, at the behest of God, stretches out his hand to slay and sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, who was to be consumed upon the wood that he himself had carried on his back (a picture of the Savior) up Mount Moriah. An angel of the Lord prevents Abraham from striking the deadly blow, commands him to release the boy, and at the same time shows him the ram that is stuck in the thornbush there. Abraham seizes the animal, kills it, and burns it up. Moses prescribes numerous sacrifices. He prescribes that the paschal lamb be slain; that it be eaten and the remains be burnt up. At the dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem countless victims, the animals for sacrifice, were offered up to the Lord during an interval of forty days. And it was the will of God that sacrifices should never cease in the Temple. Even our dearest Lady came to the Temple with a pair of turtledoves, that she might offer them to the Most High.

Why did God demand all these sacrifices? Man had

sinned, had offended God. And God hates and punishes sin. "Thou shalt die the death," was the dreadful sentence He pronounced upon Adam after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. The rebellion of our first parents brought in its train, for us all, the punishment of death.



THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

"And he put forth his hand and took the sword, to sacrifice his son. And behold an Angel of the Lord from Heaven called to him, saying ' . . . Lay not thy hand upon the boy . . . now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake.' " (Gen. 22: 10-12.)

And yet, out of mercy for fallen man, God, even then and there in paradise, promised the Savior, the spotless Lamb of God, Who through His death on the cross was to conquer death and hell and reconcile God and man.

Because of sin the whole human race was doomed to

die—and to die an eternal death. And for the whole human race the spotless Lamb took upon Himself the doom of death, even of death upon the cross. The Savior has shed His blood for us; with it He has crimsoned this guilt-stained earth. For the sins of the world Jesus died upon the cross.

This is the only Sacrifice that is pleasing to God and that appeases Him—the Sacrifice that was prefigured in the Old Testament by the slaughter of animals—the Sacrifice that is continued in an unbloody manner in the New Testament in Holy Mass.

Figure and Reality

Prior to the Savior's death upon the cross the sinful world had to sacrifice victims through slaughter and offer holocausts to appease the enraged deity. Those sacrifices derived all their worth in the eyes of God solely from the fact that they were figures of the divine Lamb to be slain upon the cross for the sins of the world. Through the slaughtering of these victims fallen mankind wished to say to God: "We have sinned, we are deserving of death; therefore we let these animals suffer death instead of us; we let them shed their blood in our place, in order to give adoration and reparation to Thine offended majesty and to proclaim before heaven and earth Thy rights over us and Thy supreme dominion." Such was sacrifice in the Old Testament, and every sacrifice demanded a new victim.

But how wholly different is the adorable Sacrifice of the spotless Lamb in the New Testament!

Upon the altars of the Catholic Church the offering is always one, always the same. This Victim arose from the dead by His own power, glorious and immortal. In Holy Mass the divine Lamb lies mystically upon the

altar in the condition of death. We do not, indeed, hear the hiss of the scourges there, nor the blows of the hammer; nor do we see the thorns, nor yet the cross; nor do we see the Blood those dreadful implements of torture caused to flow from the Savior's countless wounds, even until the last drop had been separated from His sacred Body and had actually brought about His death. At Holy Mass we have the omnipotent words of the Consecration, by which words Christ is mystically slain.

The Consecration is the real sacrificial Action. In virtue of the words of the Consecration, spoken over the bread and the wine, through the miraculous power of God, the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ are separately made present before us on the altar. And herein lies the essence of the Mass; for the words of the Consecration spoken over the bread immediately produce the Sacrament of the Body of Christ, and those pronounced over the wine, that of the Blood of Christ. Body and Blood, so separated, thus give us a lively representation of that separation, that outflowing of the Blood from the Body, which once took place upon the cross. On the cross it was bloody, here it is unbloody. Hence it is that the Mass is the Savior's unbloody Sacrifice,—the unbloody continuation of the Sacrifice of the cross.

In order to get a clearer insight into this important truth, we here call attention to the teaching of one of the prominent masters of sacred theology. (Cardinal Franzelin.)

By the words of institution, "This is My Body, this is My Blood," Christ so instituted the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood that in virtue of the words of the Consecration His Body is made present under the appearances of bread and His Blood under the appearances

of wine, both separately. But through this separate Consecration the separation and the shedding of the Blood that took place upon the cross is not here represented in some foreign thing or in mere picture, but actually in the real Body and Blood of Christ.

Hence it is that the Savior, in the moment of institution, called this separate placing of His Body and His Blood under the appearances of bread and wine the "shedding of His Blood"—*effusio sanguinis*—therefore, a Sacrifice.

So true is this that, for example, were the priest to die suddenly after the Consecration of the bread, the Savior would indeed be present on the altar under the appearances of bread, but we would have no Sacrifice, no *effusio sanguinis*.

At the same time we may not forget that our divine Victim no longer has anything in common with death. On the third day after His death upon the cross the Savior arose from the dead glorious and immortal. As He arose triumphant over all the laws of nature, the stone was cast aside from the door of His tomb and the guards were struck to the earth as though dead. He conquered death. He is the immortal King of ages; and in His omnipotence and infinite love He found a way of uniting the dignity of His Kingship with His character as the sacrificial Lamb of the New Law.

"Christus resurgens ex mortuis iam non moritur."
"Christ being risen from the dead dieth now no more."
Thus St. Paul teaches. To be sure, in virtue of the omnipotent words of the Consecration we have His sacred Body under the appearances of bread. But because He arose gloriously from the dead, because "Christ dieth now no more," we have His living Body, that is, with flesh and blood, with soul, divinity and humanity—

the whole Christ. The same is true of the chalice. In virtue of the sacred words of the Consecration the Blood of Christ is in the chalice. But because the risen Savior "dieth now no more," we have His living Blood there, i.e., the whole Christ, with flesh and blood, with body and soul, with divinity and humanity,—Christ in His



THE RESURRECTION

"This Jesus hath God raised up again, whereof all we are witnesses." (Acts 2: 32.)

entire person. Thus teaches our holy faith. I partake of the whole Christ under the appearances of bread and I partake of the whole Christ under the appearances of wine.

The divinity of Christ was clearly made manifest in the boundless love that prompted Him to die for us upon the cross; but more clearly and unmistakably still was it made manifest in the power of His resurrection. A

Victim Who triumphs over death and through His own power arises from the grave is surely not less great than when He offers Himself of His own will to be tormented and to die upon the cross for ungrateful sinners.

Standing beneath the Savior's cross, we see Him offering His life in untold agony for sinners; we see how the sun hides its face away because its Creator, God, is hanging there and how awful darkness covers the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour; and we are overwhelmed by the magnitude of it all. We realize the greatness of our guilt; we feel the immensity of His love! But when we see the Savior rising victorious from the grave, transfigured, resplendent in light and glory, more dazzling than the rays of the brilliant sun, we are quite overcome by His divine splendor. Then do we feel more truly still the greatness of His power.

Confidence grows in the heart of the priest. Yes; he may turn trustingly to God, relying upon this Risen King, upon this Conqueror over life and death, in short, upon Omnipotence itself.

If Jesus is a spotless offering because He died for us upon the cross, then Christ arisen from the dead may rightly be called a holy oblation. Death was not allowed to gain the mastery over Him as over us men. We must die; our lot is the grave and corruption, because we are sinners. But Jesus is the thrice-holy God, the source of all sanctity. Hence He could not, as is the lot of sinful man, see corruption: "Non dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem"—"Thou wilt not give Thy holy one to see corruption." (Ps. 15:10.) The death of Christ and that death alone was the great Sacrifice of Reparation for the sins of the world.

The Crucified will ever be and ever remain for us the all-persuasive cause of our grateful love. Devoutly and

with sorrowful hearts we kiss His sacred wounds; and we adore His holy Body, eternally and inseparably united with His divinity. How could we then possibly imagine that the Savior's sacred Body would remain in the grave or fall into decay? The very thought is repugnant to us. How were it then possible for us to adore Him as the Saint of saints? Who would be so rash as to offer the eternal Father His well beloved Son in a state of corruption? It is, accordingly, the most natural thing in the world for the Church to remind us particularly in Holy Mass that Jesus arose gloriously from the dead.

We see the priest at the altar bend the knee before the sacred Host. O souls redeemed by the Savior Christ, remember that here upon the altar we have the highest and the holiest of all offerings: the Saint of saints, the Almighty, the Arisen One, the Lamb of the Apocalypse, before Whom the four and twenty ancients and the four living creatures prostrate themselves in trembling adoration!

CHAPTER 13

A STAINLESS VICTIM

THE bitter passion, the resurrection, the ascension into heaven—what a glorious, inseparable trilogy! It is precisely in the Savior's ascension into heaven that the dignity of our sacrificial Victim is made manifest in all its greatness.

The offerings of the Old Testament, the animals to be sacrificed, were nothing more than mere creatures. They were bred and raised on the earth, and it was their lot to disappear from the earth again through sacrifice. Despite the distinction of being chosen to give up their lives upon an altar, their existence nevertheless pertained only to the things of earth.

How unutterably more noble and exalted is the sacrificial Lamb of the New Testament! Of course, the Savior was borne from Calvary to the grave—but He burst that tomb asunder! He arose victorious over death and the grave and ascended into heaven.

All other offerings were doomed to destruction; they originated from the earth and again returned to the dust from which they had been taken. But how different with our divine Victim! From heaven He came and, in the presence of His disciples, He ascended into heaven again.

By His return into heaven the Savior shows that He came from God; that His Sacrifice is the Sacrifice of a God; and that of His very nature He possesses the supreme prerogative of sitting at the right hand of the

Father and sharing with Him glory and dominion over all times, and all peoples, and the whole of creation.

After the completion of sacrifice all other victims of slaughter cease to be of estimation and value; but the Savior, despite His bloody sacrificial death, remains the same as before: ever precisely as great, ever equally holy, ever immortal, ever God. Indeed, His beauty and His infinite perfections are so great that heaven alone is worthy to receive Him.

It is absolutely impossible to discover in the Savior even the slightest taint or suggestion of any imperfection. He did indeed freely take upon Himself the sins of all men; He offered Himself to be responsible for them; and yet no slightest shadow of sin falls upon Him. He Himself calmly spoke the words: "Which of you can prove Me guilty of sin?"

He lived upon the earth and He died upon the earth, but not the slightest earthly blemish clung to Him. Here below the godless were permitted to tread upon Him as upon a worm. In the glory of the Father He is now eternally withdrawn from the persecutions of His enemies. No earthly stain defaces Him. His immaculate purity is utterly perfect. In heaven it unfolds itself in all its splendor and shines with a glory such as divine omnipotence alone can bestow upon virtues and merits.

All these thoughts the priest now vividly calls to mind again. And hence he is fully justified in praying at this part of the Mass: "O Lord, I offer up to Thy most excellent majesty a Victim which is stainless"—*Hostiam immaculatam*.

Now we see the immaculate Host victorious upon its Eucharistic throne and, at its feet, a throng of devout worshippers; and, better than ever before, we see in it that King Who sitteth at the right hand of the Father

and ruleth in the glory of heaven. The eyes of our faith behold the majestic vision that was revealed on Patmos to the great Seer of the Apocalypse: in the midst of seven golden candlesticks was enthroned the



CHRIST ENTHRONED

“And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the son of man . . . And His head and His hairs were white . . . and His eyes were as a flame of fire . . . and He had in His right hand seven stars. And from His mouth came out a sharp two edged sword. And His face was as the sun shineth in His power.” (Apoc. 1: 13-17.)

Son of Man—robed in royal purple down to the feet—and girt about the breast with a golden girdle—His hair, symbol of dignity and purity, was as white wool, and as snow—and His eyes were as fire—and He had in His right hand seven stars—and from His mouth came

out a sharp two-edged sword, as it were—and His face was as the sun shineth in its power.

Thus the Eucharistic Lamb appeared to the gaze of the beloved disciple,—to him who reclined upon the Savior's bosom at the Last Supper; but at this sight he fell to the ground like one dead. Before the Eucharistic throne of the spotless Lamb we, too, must ever bend the knee or prostrate ourselves in reverential fear and adoration.

Ah no; we no longer have before us a passing, ephemeral thing of earth, but "the holy bread of life everlasting and the chalice of eternal salvation." And with these sublime words the priest finishes the first of the three glorious prayers of the Mass after the Consecration.

The Prayer "Vouchsafe to Look"

This is a prayer that God may receive our Sacrifice as He received other sacrifices in the Old Law. Mention is therefore made of those sacrifices in the Old Dispensation that were especially pleasing to the Almighty. Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech were types of the Savior. Abel was killed by his envious brother; through the jealousy of His own brethren was Our Lord's Blood shed. Abraham, ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac, prefigures the Heavenly Father immolating His only-begotten Son. Melchisedech the priest-king, who offered a clean sacrifice of bread and wine, bears a strong resemblance to Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest and King of Glory, Who offers Himself daily under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Church is full of hope and confidence that the Eternal Father has lent a propitious ear to her supplications. In order to strengthen this hope within us, she directs the priest to address a second prayer to God, wherein reference is again made to the greatness of our offering.

Extending his hands, the priest says: "Vouchsafe to

look down upon them (our offerings) with a gracious and tranquil countenance, and to accept them, even as Thou wast pleased to accept the offerings of Thy just servant, Abel, and the sacrifice of Abraham, our patriarch, and that which Melchisedech, Thy high priest, offered up to Thee, a holy sacrifice, a victim without blemish."

Here the priest recalls the fairest times and the most beautiful sacrifices of the Old Testament. He reminds God of those sweet hours when with gracious and tranquil countenance He showed Himself so loving towards the few just ones that offered Him the homage of their strong faith. And as God was pleased all lovingly and joyfully to accept those offerings—thus the Church prays—so may He now look down upon ours with mildness and benignity and graciously accept them also.

We cannot find a better opportunity of again calling to mind these sacrifices of the Old Law, these best and most faithful figures of Jesus, our sacrificial Lamb, than just in the Mass itself. So let us briefly contemplate them, for the strengthening of our faith.

Three Remarkable Personages

Three remarkable personages rise up before us: Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech. In his characteristic trait, in his life, and in his offering, each one bears a striking resemblance to the Savior.

Abel's characteristic trait is innocence. His life is that of a good shepherd. His offerings are the choicest lambs of his flock.

Abraham's characteristic trait is obedience. His life is that of a good father, the head of a family. As an offering he brings his only son, Isaac, up to Mount Moria.

The striking thing about Melchisedech is the mystery that surrounds his origin. His life is that of a priest and king. Bread and wine are his offerings. All that we find in the Savior again, only in a much nobler and much more perfect way.

Like unto Abel, the Savior is innocent. He is innocence itself incarnate. And because of this innocence He becomes a Victim to His own brethren, as Abel fell a victim to his brother Cain. They put Him to death, lest there continue before their eyes a life of virtue that was a standing condemnation of their lives of vice.

Like unto Abel, the Savior leads the life of the Good Shepherd, Who never abandons His sheep, Who loves them and leads them to abundant pastures, where they find the rich food of everlasting life. It were difficult indeed to find a picture more faithful to the character and the goodness of Jesus than the beautiful picture of Abel, the good shepherd.

As an offering Jesus sacrifices *Himself* to the Father. He, therefore, offers Him the purest, most spotless, most holy Lamb of the flock of the human race, the Firstling of all the centuries. And it will ever remain the Savior's loving task to pasture virgin souls, those little lambs of innocence, to call them to Him, and to lead them to His Father's ever green glades of sanctity.

Abraham is the second sublime figure of the Savior.

Like unto Abraham, the Savior was a Model of perfect obedience. He was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. And His obedience goes so far that without hesitation He becomes present on the altar as often as a priest summons Him with the sacred words of the Consecration, so far that He daily enters into the hearts of men if they but desire it.

Like unto Abraham, Jesus lived an exalted family

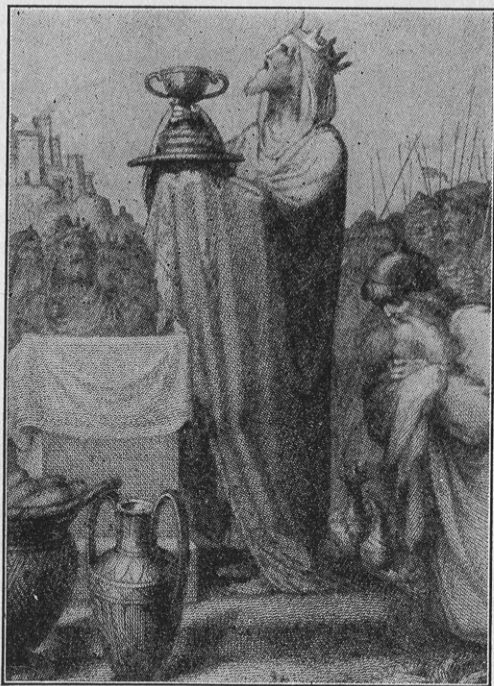
life. He lives in uninterrupted union with His heavenly Father—never separates Himself for a moment from His children upon earth—accompanies them step by step as they journey as pilgrims through this vale of tears—consoles and strengthens them in sufferings—assists them in trials and struggles and temptations—and at their deathbed receives their last sigh.

Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, the only Child of Mary, just as Isaac was the only son of Abraham and of Sarah. God demanded of Abraham that he sacrifice his only son, even as He demanded Jesus, His only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Out of obedience the only-begotten Son of God Himself carried the wood of the cross up to Mt. Calvary, just as Abraham's only son himself carried the wood upon which he was to be sacrificed up to Mt. Moria.

Melchisedech is the third wonderful figure of the Savior.

A heavy veil of mystery envelops the origin of Jesus; so, too, that of Melchisedech. As God, the Savior has no mother; as such He has only the Father, by Whom He was begotten from all eternity by a generation so wondrous and so exalted that the mystery of it remains impenetrably profound to even the keenest intellects of men. As Man, on the other hand, He has no father, but only the Mother from whom He assumed flesh and blood in that incomprehensible supernatural way which we admire and revere in the mystery of the Incarnation. Far from detracting from the perpetual virginity of Mary, the Savior's birth but added new luster and greater beauty to His Mother's spotless purity. Through it her virginal innocence received that heavenly attractiveness which has called forth the unstinted admiration of all ages.

Like unto Melchisedech, the Savior is King. He is the King of heaven and earth. He is Ruler over all nations and peoples; for from the Father has He received them as His inheritance. He shall one day summon to His



MELCHISEDECH, PRIEST AND KING,
OFFERS SACRIFICE

“Melchisedech, the King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God.” (Gen. 14: 18.)

judgment seat the kings and potentates of earth and shall demand of them an account of their stewardship. Of all the monarchs that have ever lived upon the earth

the Savior in heaven alone wears a royal crown upon His head. He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Like unto Melchisedech, the Savior is Priest, the Anointed of the Lord. The only sacrifice ever worthy of God was His Sacrifice on the cross on Golgotha. This Sacrifice He continually offers to God anew in Holy Mass. As did Melchisedech, so also Jesus offers bread and wine. But ah! what kind of bread! And what kind of wine! The bread is changed into His own Body; the wine is changed into His own Blood! Bread and wine that are nothing less than His own divine Person!

Rightly, then, does the priest draw from these sublime thoughts renewed hope that the Eternal Father will graciously accept his offering. Still he cannot refrain from supplicating Him anew through yet another prayer. He has indeed strengthened his faith through reflections on the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. He has reminded God of the gracious kindness wherewith He formerly received those holy ones who were types of this Sacrifice now being offered. Yet even that does not suffice. So now he sends to heaven a prayer redolent of poesy and holiness—sublime. It is the third prayer after the Consecration.

CHAPTER 14

EVERY HEAVENLY BLESSING

The Prayer: "We Humbly Beseech Thee"

This prayer is most ancient. It is, in brief, a petition that our offering be carried into God's presence by His holy angel. "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God." (Apoc. 8: 3.)

THUS the priest prays, as he bows low with his hands joined and placed upon the altar:

"We humbly beseech Thee, almighty God, to command that these our offerings be borne by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thine altar on high, in the presence of Thy divine majesty, that as many of us as shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son by partaking thereof from this altar may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

Such in its sublimity is the third prayer after the Consecration.

This beautiful prayer knows no bounds in its request for sublime graces; we simply plead for them all! *Omni benedictione coelesti et gratia*. "Every heavenly blessing and grace." What thrilling words! With one masterly stroke, so to speak, the Church does away with that strange opinion so frequently voiced: "The more modest and unassuming one is in asking for graces and blessings, the more surely and swiftly will his petitions be granted by God." What a wrong notion, and how it belittles God! As though man could place restrictions

upon the magnanimity and liberality of God! No; if we have Jesus in our hands, or better still, in our hearts, and if we then bring Him to the Eternal Father, our prayer is simply omnipotent; for then the Savior is with us and prays for us with all the love of His divine Heart. God can indeed resist the half-hearted prayers of His creatures, but He cannot resist the powerful voice of His well-beloved Son.

The Power of Prayer in Holy Mass

Hence, our prayers in Holy Mass are an irresistible power. And, therefore, we now ask of God not only one certain grace, one definite blessing, one particular benefit, one well defined aid; we do not ask of Him that He ease merely one pain, or dry one tear, or help us realize one cherished hope; we do not only pray for such and such a loved one; no—we see before us an endless vista of all graces, the well-spring of all blessings, and each and every one of those who are dear to us. And that is why we want the most and the best that we can possibly hope for or desire. And that is what we ask for ourselves, for our dear ones, and for all men without exception. And we set no bounds to our request, and we know no measure: *Omni benedictione coelesti et gratia*—we ask for *every* heavenly blessing, for *every* grace.

Oh, why is this consoling doctrine thus brought home to us in every Mass, so little reflected upon and so little taken to heart? Why do not the many, many souls that so hunger after graces stretch out both hands to take them? Why does not the mighty host of Christian peoples, when desirous of urgent graces from God, march in serried ranks to Holy Mass, there to unite their prayer with this prayer of Holy Church?

Of course, it is a good and praiseworthy practice to

make novenas at the altars of the Virgin Mother and the saints. But of inexpressibly greater value is a prayer said at the foot of the altar when Jesus, the Giver of graces, offers Himself to the Father. One only Mass, devoutly heard and offered unto God, means unspeakably more than to place at His feet a thousand other prayers. If only the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass were better known and more frequented—ah, then surely we would not find such great spiritual poverty among so great a portion of our Catholic people.

As Many As Shall Receive

However, it is to be noted that this abundance of all celestial graces and blessings is not equally great for all. The priest asks it especially for “as many of us as shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son by partaking thereof from this altar.”

Here the Church expressly manifests her mind and her desire, so often also otherwise manifested and expressed, namely, that the faithful who assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass should also receive Holy Communion! And this was thus expressed by the Council of Trent: “The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally by the actual reception of the Eucharist.” (Sess. 22, cap. 6.) And Canon 863 of the Code of Canon Law states: “The faithful should be admonished according to the decrees of the Holy See to receive the Eucharistic bread frequently, and even daily, and that those who assist at Holy Mass should not only communicate spiritually, but be prepared to receive in reality our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.”

It is, indeed, well and good to petition God with words

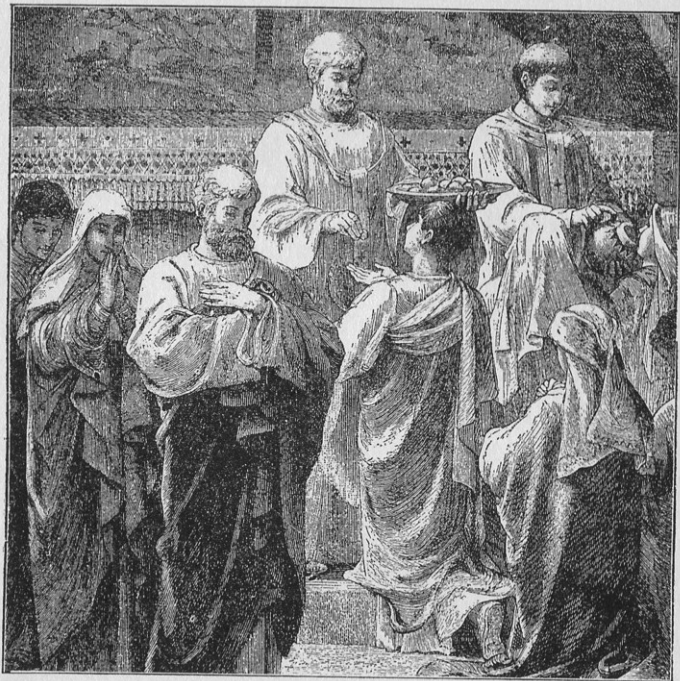
to bestow graces and benefits upon us; but if our disposition of mind and heart is such that we do not even wish to receive the Savior, the Source of all graces—does such a disposition show that we feel a real need of graces? Does such a disposition show that we are animated by the earnest desire to have God answer our prayers? The Giver of graces is within our reach, His hands full of all graces and blessings for us, and we do not even offer Him the shelter of our hearts! Who would ever call that an ardent yearning for graces? And is not the Church perfectly right in exhorting us to strive after the Highest and Best? The greatness of our offering gives us the right of making great demands upon the generosity of God.

But a little investigation regarding the way so many Catholics, even good Catholics, pray leads to the conviction that these misguided souls are traveling down the wrong road. How, then, will they ever arrive at their goal? They pray chiefly for earthly goods, for temporal things, little nothingnesses in the eyes of God; and in the meantime they neglect the two most efficacious means of grace: Holy Mass and Holy Communion.

Prayer, Mass, and Communion are, as it were, a firm and strong ladder that surely and safely leads up to God when we would enrich ourselves with graces from Him. To be satisfied with prayer alone would simply mean to remain content to stand upon the lowest rung.

Are they ever going to return, I wonder—those glorious days of the early Church when each morning at their Mass the Apostles distributed Communion to the whole assembly? when the little chapels and the corridors of the catacombs, which then served as their churches, were too small to accommodate all those who hungered for the sacred Host? Can it be possible that it is gone forever,

the beautiful custom that everyone who goes to Mass also receives the Savior? Or is the liturgical movement and this Eucharistic era bringing it back? For this last we hope and pray. Do Catholics of our day really believe that they will never again have need of the martyr heroism and fortitude of those earlier times? Are they



MASS IN THE CATACOMBS

so absolutely sure that the days of bloody persecution shall never return again? Is it so utterly out of the question that martyrdom be the only way out for you, for me, for us Catholics all? Certain signs seem to in-

dicate that also in our times we must be prepared—prepared for everything!

How can we hope to have the courage fearlessly to offer our life for the Savior if we be not reared in the school of the mighty Sacrifice of the Cross that He consummated for us? How can we hope to have that supreme courage when we do not drink of the chalice that maketh Christian heroes!

It is impossible to carry off the palm of martyrdom unless we follow the great Martyr of the Cross—unless first we accompany Him to the chamber of the Last Supper in order thence to begin the arduous way that leads to Calvary.

CHAPTER 15

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE ABODE OF PAIN AND THE KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

AT THE moment of the Consecration, when the Savior came down upon the altar, it really seemed as though the golden portals of eternity were thrown wide open. Or was it not so? Was it not granted to us for a little while to gaze into that mysterious kingdom—His kingdom? It is impossible to have Jesus so near and to possess Him without thinking of that world without end which He purchased for us with His Precious Blood and of which He is the King.

Jesus is God! But where shall we seek the everlasting abodes of His divinity? Jesus is the Savior! But where are His saved ones to be found? Jesus is charity! But where are we to feast upon His divine love?

But the grim realities of life do not permit us to range long in heavenly spheres; only too quickly does earth make itself felt. A yearning for happiness comes over us—but the eye gazes into empty space. Death robbed us of the dearest, of the best, that we had! Alas! how many loved ones have already been snatched away! Oh, where can they be? This anxious query pursues us everywhere, follows us up to the very altar.

Purgatory and Heaven

The Savior has promised His kingdom unto us all. But where in the other world are the dead? Are they enjoying the bliss of heaven or do they languish in painful purification? We do not know; we cannot say with

certainly. Hence it is that our thoughts just naturally go out to the poor souls that are suffering in purgatory's dark night; and we are filled with fear, lest our dear ones be numbered among them.

Still, this uncertainty should not at all deprive us of the hope that our dear departed are already in the bliss of heaven. After having shed quiet tears on the threshold of purgatory, we should look up to heaven with happy and hopeful hearts.

Purgatory—heaven! Ah, what a large place they occupy in our hearts! And even now, after the Consecration, now when our hearts are deeply penetrated with the truths of faith so vividly presented to us, Holy Church places upon our lips a prayer for the dead—and at the same time a prayer for ourselves, poor sinners that we are, that we may one day be numbered among the blessed in heaven.

Ah, those who have fallen asleep in the Lord! We seek someone to whom we can speak of our dear departed with the happy certainty that he will listen to us with lively interest and genuine goodness of heart and that he will share our pain with all the sympathetic understanding of perfect Christian charity. We seek one who will convey to them the greetings of our grateful hearts, the assurance that we shall not forget them in prayer. And who can do this better than the Eucharistic Savior? Here upon the altar He gives us the riches of His merits. And with this treasure in our hands we now trustingly approach the Eternal Father and address to Him the plaintive prayer for the dead.

The Prayer: "Be Mindful, Also, O Lord."

After appealing in a special way for certain souls, the priest implores of God, for all the souls in purgatory:

A place of refreshment, for they are in suffering; *a place of light*, for, as yet, deprived of God's vision, they are in darkness; *a place of peace*, because they are enduring the purging flames. These very words, refreshment, light and peace, are to be found in thousands of inscriptions appearing in the Catacombs, or cemeteries of the first Christians.



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REMEMBER THE HOLY SOULS IN PURGATORY

“It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.” (II. Mach. 12: 46.)

“Be mindful, also, O Lord, of Thy servants, N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace.” Thus prays the priest as he slowly joins his hands and, pausing for a few moments, prays silently by name for those departed souls whom he desires to remember especially—the *memento* that Catholics value so highly. Thereupon he continues: “To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Who are these servants and handmaids of the Lord? They are our dear parents and our brothers and sisters, our "brethren in the flesh" in very truth, to whom we were united by the strong bonds of blood. They are relatives, faithful friends, loving souls who shared with us the little they had, and their hopes and fears, who gladly took upon themselves our troubles, in order to make life's journey easier for us! How often since then we have wished that we could speak with them once more. While they were living among us we probably caused them no little pain, grieved them deeply by our ingratitude, or offended them seriously by our youthful levity and thoughtlessness. Oh, if we had only treated them differently, in a better way! Oh, if they were still among us! How earnestly we would strive to right all the wrong we did them! But now it is too late.

But no! It is not too late! Now is really the time when such a wish can be realized best of all. Come to the altar, all you that seek a loved one in the great beyond! Come, you disconsolate fathers and mothers, whom death robbed of a dear child, your hope and your support! Come, you who were united in holy matrimony and who have seen death's icy hand tear asunder the sacred bonds of wedlock! Come, you poor, desolate orphans, from whom that grim specter so ruthlessly snatched father and mother away! Come, all of you, whose life's path death has crossed and carry your sorrow to the altar here and pray for those who have gone home to God.

Surely, it is right and just, good and praiseworthy to cherish the remembrance of the departed and to adorn their graves with flowers; but it is more praiseworthy far to unite the grief of your hearts with the heartblood of the Savior Himself, that you may offer it up to God

in the sweet odor that ascends to heaven from Calvary.

Holy Mass is the great school of brotherly love. Holy Church clasps in her motherly arms not only the dear departed for whom we mourn, but all, all who sleep in the peace of Christ. She asks a threefold grace for all.

The Church's Petition

In the first place, the Church has the priest pray that *a place of refreshment* may be given to them.

Poor souls! How long, we wonder, have they been suffering in those mysterious flames of purification? It is high time, indeed, that the doors of their prison-house be opened—high time that they be freed! Refresh them with the saving showers of Thy grace, dear God, and quench those awful flames!

Thereupon the priest asks that *a place of light* be given them.

Light! Ah yes—what a blessing is not light! But they are in darkness,—darkness on all sides. They are utterly in the dark as regards the time of their deliverance. No faintest dawn even to suggest to them the break of that day when the justice of God shall declare itself satisfied; they know not whether it will be in years, or decades, or centuries. Dear God, send them a ray of light from Thy heaven! Let the angel of deliverance bring them the glad tidings that even today they shall be with Thee in Paradise, in the kingdom of joy and of light.

And, lastly, the Church supplicates God that He may grant them *a place of peace*.

Everyone, but especially the Christian soul, yearns ardently for peace. Peace! A wondrous word, that. But alas! for so many it is only a word, nothing more. These poor souls had to fight the good fight all their lives long. They were children of Adam; and hence they

were daily exposed to the hardships of labor—and hunger—and sickness—and corporal infirmities—and endless troubles—and the heartlessness of the ungrateful—and the contradiction of the wicked—and the disappointments of human injustice—and the malice and snares of the devil. They were followers of Christ! And hence it was their lot to experience the conflict of the passions, the tyranny of the world, and the deceits of the devil. Theirs was a battle for life or death, bravely fought that they might preserve untarnished the fair garment of innocence; that they might defend the cross of Christ and hold it in high esteem; that they might be true to their vocation and calling; that they might keep themselves from betraying their Lord and Master and from losing all right to the everlasting inheritance of heaven. And now when it is all over they must remain in strife with the justice of God, which punishes them and forces them to make bitter satisfaction.

They were already so tired of the battles of life. No wonder that now, in this so unequal strife in which they are so utterly helpless, they yearn with all the powers of their soul for the day of everlasting peace. Oh, where is the mighty one who will give them that peace? Good Jesus, it is You—and You alone!

There on Golgotha, on the cross, my Savior, You blotted out the handwriting that was against us, the sentence of eternal death that had been pronounced upon the world one fateful day. Oh, with one merciful word blot out the incomparably milder sentence which Your divine justice pronounced upon these poor souls. Oh, revoke their sentence; extinguish the flames of their purgatory! One only drop of Your Precious Blood were enough—and we have all Your Blood upon the altar here. Dear Jesus, give them eternal rest. Remember what suf-

ferings they cost You, how You shed all Your Blood for them, and do not let them suffer any longer.

The Prayer: "To Us Sinners Also."

The priest is directed to raise his voice a little as he pronounces the first three words; then he continues the prayer inaudibly. At the same time, the rubric bids him strike his breast, as did the publican of old, who cried out in all humility: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Thus in word and gesture the priest acknowledges his unworthiness. He asks for himself, and for those present, some part and fellowship with the saints, naming in particular fifteen holy martyrs. Into this blessed company, he beseeches God to admit us *through Christ Our Lord*.

In virtue of Holy Mass we fondly hope that the poor souls will be freed from their sufferings and enter the kingdom of heaven. And so in spirit we follow them thither and cast a glance into that blissful abode where some day we are going to be united with them.

Yes; also we hope one day to enter heaven; for it is our Father's house where the many mansions are. But ah! in what profuse abundance the divine mercies of God will have to be showered upon us before we can cross the threshold of that kingdom of love and of bliss!

Filled with the consciousness of his own guilt and the guilt of all who are present, the priest now breaks the silence of hallowed prayer. In a loud voice that is yet subdued he humbly speaks the words: *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*—"To us sinners also." And he strikes his breast in token of contrition, then, in whispered words:

"To us sinners, also Thy servants, who put our trust in the multitude of Thy mercies, vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with Thy holy apostles and martyrs: with John, Stephen, Mathias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and with all Thy saints. Into their company do Thou, we beseech Thee, admit us, not weighing our merits, but freely pardoning our offences. Through Christ our Lord."

This prayer is not so much an admission of our guilt as an expression of our yearning for heaven. The consciousness of our having offended God casts a shadow upon our sweet hope of abiding with Him forever. However, in consideration of the Lamb of God, Whose Blood flows so superabundantly upon the altar for the salvation of mankind, the sin-laden soul takes new courage and directs this heartfelt prayer to the God of mercy.

What humility, and yet what rare beauty, there is in this *partem aliquam*—"some little part." Dear God, for Jesus' sake, Who here prays with us and for us, and because of His merits, grant us, sinners though we are, at least a little part, a modest corner in Thy kingdom; give us at least the lowest place among the throngs of Thy saints; for to be the least in the kingdom of heaven is to be exceedingly great. Thou art a God of tender mercies, of infinite goodness. We beseech Thee to number all here present among the multitude of those who lived for Thee alone and who loved Thee with their whole hearts. We confess that by our sins we have crucified Thy Son, yet behold us sorrowful at Thy feet. Be merciful! In Thy great goodness grant us pardon.

How easy it is and how consoling to the human heart to ask the pardon of God, if one but raises his eyes to heaven's heights from Calvary's hill! How ennobling and inspiring it is to be allowed to ask of God's mercy a place among the blessed of His kingdom while the injustice of man obstinately and mercilessly refuses one even a tiny little place among the happy ones of earth.

One of the most consoling of Catholic dogmas is glorified here—the dogma of the communion of saints, the intimate union of the Church of Christ.

Here before the altar we positively feel the presence of the *Church triumphant* in heaven. Does it not seem

to us that we are cognizant in part of their songs and their prayers, that we see the blessed as they pass in adoration before the spotless Lamb? Truly, we often feel that we are seized and carried along by that flood of blessedness which abates the heat of the furnace of earthly afflictions and gives new life and fresh vigor to the weak aspirations of our hope.

A little while ago it was the *Church suffering* whose sighs and prayers we seemed to hear before the altar here. Those suffering members asked us for our help. A burning desire draws them to God; but God's infinite justice answers with a "No, not yet all free from stain!" And now it is their hope that our hearts will melt with love and pity for them and that we will offer Masses, Communion, prayers, and good works for their release.

The *Church militant* is here upon earth; she moves in a sphere that is between the joys of Paradise and Purgatory's bitter pains. Here, betwixt her two inseparable sisters, so to speak, her heart must needs burn with charity. And thus we, her children, are at one and the same time filled with a mighty love for our suffering brothers and sisters and a mightier love for God and His heaven,—for the God Who is the soul's only happiness and in Whom alone our hearts can be at rest and all our desires perfectly satisfied.

Of these three Churches Christ the Savior is the principle of unity. With the utmost solicitude He, the Good Shepherd, watches over His own. He leads the sheep of the *Church militant* to the rich feeding grounds of the Faith. He feeds the *Church suffering* upon the green pastures of hope. And for the *Church triumphant* He reserves the heavenly meadows of supernal joys, where faith will be no more, nor hope, but everlasting love!

CHAPTER 16

THE WORTH OF OUR OFFERING

The End of the Canon

The Canon of the Mass now ends sublimely in a burst of praise: "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, all honor and glory. World without end. Amen."

THE priest now takes the consecrated Host in his right hand, holds it over the chalice, and then makes with it the holy sign of the cross, three times over the chalice and twice between the chalice and his breast. At the same time he speaks the sacred words: *Per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso, est tibi, Deo Patri omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnis honor et gloria.*

Just before this he had prayed, "By Whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, quicken, bless, and bestow on us all these good things." And now has come the sublime prayer given in Latin above: "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory." And he adds, "World without end. Amen."

In these words expression is given to two eternal truths,—truths that are the foundation and the norm of the true Christian life.

The glorification of God is the purpose of our existence, the end of man. For His honor alone has God created us. The Creator could not have another end in view. He had to create us for an end worthy of Himself;

and the only end worthy of Him is Himself and His glory. If we perform the duties that enable us to reach this end, we shall be eternally happy. Such is the first of the two teachings contained in the above words of Holy Mass.

And the second teaching of faith contained therein is that we cannot of ourselves procure the glorification of God. "Without Me you can do nothing." But at the same time the Church gives us the means of faithfully fulfilling the obligations and duties that will promote the honor and glory of God.

The Summary of a Christian Life

Pray, work, suffer! In these three words the whole life of a Christian is summed up, and his thoughts and actions. They tell us everything that we must do in order to attain the end for which God created us. But we must remember that no prayer, no action, no sacrifice of ours, no matter how heroic, has the power to draw down the benevolence of God upon us, if they are performed by the purely natural powers of the soul. We need grace. Without grace there can be no supernatural relationship with God and hence no merit for eternal life. Something is wanting: the bridge, so to speak, that makes possible union between the soul and God. But the Savior is our Mediator: He is the bridge. United with Him, we live in and by divine grace; it is through Him that our works are distinguished by the stamp of this grace; it is through Him that they get its beauty and splendor.

"I am the way," the Savior says. Whosoever follows this way will infallibly attain to life everlasting; whosoever follows it not fails of his last end. Furthermore, Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." Without Him, then, it is simply impossible to do anything

that can in any way be of value for life eternal. In other words, without Him no merit, no heaven.

“Through Him”

Per ipsum—“through Him,” we say in the Mass. It is true—only too often our *prayers* arise from a dry,



THE DIVINE MODEL

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8: 12.)

listless heart, proper love and devotion are wanting, fiery enthusiasm is far away. Our prayer is spiritless and heavy; we pray under necessity and with great fatigue.

But lightly and swiftly does our prayer ascend to the throne of God *through Jesus*, and *through Jesus* it is there accepted with infinite love and tenderness.

Therefore, have confidence! The Savior Himself has commanded us to pray. But—so He taught us—at the Father's throne we must always appeal to Him, the Mediator; in other words, we must pray in His name. If we do that, He has promised that our prayer will be heard. Holy Church, our model in all things, ever prays in the name of Jesus. *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*—"through Jesus Christ our Lord,"—that, as we have said before, is the closing formula of every liturgical prayer.

In Holy Mass we are in possession of something infinitely powerful. There the priest has the Savior, the sacred Host in his hands. And with the Host, with Jesus Himself, he turns immediately to God in the name of us all: *Per ipsum*. As though he would say: "Through Him, through this Thy Son here present, hear us, O good God. Behold, we have come to Thee with confidence bringing to Thee all our petitions and necessities. We have but one wish now, that they be submitted to Thee through Jesus Christ, Thy well beloved Son, Who became our Brother and our Friend that Thou mayest hear our needs from His lips. Behold here Thy well beloved Son, O merciful Father, and *per ipsum*, through Him, let our prayer come to Thee."

"With Him"

After prayer come our exterior *works*; and these we must perform *cum ipso*, "with Him."

Grace unites us with *Jésus*, even as the branch is united with the tree, as the grapes are united with the vine. "With Him" and "through Him" we form, as it

were, one person; and it is just from this that our works derive all their power and all their worth.

During Holy Mass, the most weighty and most sacred of all her actions, the Church has the priest say the Our Father. Those are the Savior's own words; He Himself dictated them to us to His Father. When we say that prayer we pray word for word "with Him;" and it is under the influence of the divine words that we best of all act "through Him." The *per ipsum* and *cum ipso* are realized in all actuality by means of these words.

In fact, the Church is very solicitous that the Our Father be used in every more important liturgical action. She places it upon the lips of the priest at all his prescribed prayers. She recommends that her children make diligent use of it in their morning and evening prayers, in all their devotions, and even when at work during the course of the day; for the Our Father is ever an echo from out the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As often as a Catholic says the Our Father he prays without more ado *per ipsum*,—"through Him;" and the works he then performs are *cum ipso*,—"with Him."

O Christian soul, no matter what your state of life may be, no matter what your social rank, whether rich or poor, high or low, master or servant,—if you work *cum ipso*, "with Him," you will labor in the service of God, and all that you do will be divinely rewarded. Holy Mass ennobles all men, and more surely the poor and the lowly; for even the most miserable life is there united with the Savior's life upon the altar and is offered to the Eternal Father. How many a sad and dreary lot in life appears wholly transfigured in the light of these considerations!

So do banish all the faint-heartedness of so many souls

who strangely imagine they are quite incapable of doing anything great for God just because they do not attain to any eminent distinction in the world and accomplish no great achievements. What a gross error that! God does not weigh the value and importance of a work by human judgments and social position, but solely by the consideration whether or no it is done in union with the Savior, whether *cum ipso*—"with Him." And the most insignificant of mortals can do that just as well as the intellectual giant and the man of mighty deeds—the highest just as well as the lowest.

Therefore, suppose it should happen that there arises among the people one who has the power to bring all the nations of the earth to his feet, who is a veritable miracle of wisdom and learning, a prodigy who astonishes the whole world. In the eyes of God all that were simply nothing, if it were not done with and for God. Your humble works and labors, O Christian soul, are of much greater value and efficacy in the eyes of God, if you but do everything *cum ipso*, "with Him."

"In Him"

But yet a third blessing is in readiness for us. Our sufferings become meritorious and agreeable to God. To pray *per ipsum*, to work *cum ipso* draws down upon us the good pleasure of God; but to suffer *in ipso*, "in Him"—how that must cause the good God to look down upon us with most gracious condescension!

Let us, therefore, remember well that simple word, *in ipso*—"in Jesus;" for that must teach us the great art of giving to all our sacrifices a supernatural beauty and a value utterly divine. And when we here speak of sacrifices we also mean our little crosses and sufferings of every day, our penances and mortifications.

If we make these sacrifices *per ipsum* and *cum ipso*—"through Him and with Him"—we can indeed attain to various degrees of perfection. But if they are to shine in brightest light and in all their splendor, we must be careful to withdraw them from the gaze of man and to shield them from all praise. God alone may know them.

It is because of this—and herein is contained a weighty lesson—that in Holy Mass the sacrifice of His only Son is offered to the Father *in ipso*, "in Him," which means the same as "hidden in Him." Here is the mystery of how we can suffer most meritoriously for God.

Ah yes, suffer! But hidden away in Christ: *in ipso*, to suffer in Him, that is to say, without complaining about our afflictions, without boasting about them, without even seeking the sympathy of others. To suffer, and at the same time to keep all our sacrifices hidden from the world; to suffer, therefore, after the example of Christ: that is Christian greatness!

When the Savior consummated the mighty sacrifice of the cross on the heights of Calvary, His divine omnipotence surrounded it with a mysterious darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour: He concealed the most terrible of His sufferings from the eyes of a profane and godless world. Yes; a great darkness came down upon the world and enveloped everything, as we read in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke.

Reflect seriously upon this, Christian soul. Knowing this, how will it still be possible for you continually to complain of your sufferings to others. Oh, I am sure that hereafter you will suffer *in ipso*,—your sufferings will be hidden away in Jesus.

Holy Mass is truly an ideal and lovely trysting-place for all good souls who thus pray and toil and suffer.

CHAPTER 17

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Our Father

The Our Father is now recited by the priest as a preparation for Holy Communion. It is said aloud that the people may join in its several petitions. There is particular reference to Holy Communion in the "give us this day our daily bread."

ONE day the Apostles approached the Savior with this simple and humble request, "Lord, teach us to pray!" And from the lips of the Divine Savior then fell those heavenly words: *Pater noster, qui es in coelis* . . . "Our Father, Who art in heaven" . . . And the Our Father, the foremost of prayers, was deeply written into the hearts of men for all time.

The Lord's Prayer is nowhere so fittingly used as now in Holy Mass. The altar is Mount Calvary. It is on Mount Calvary that, through the Savior's Sacrifice, man again becomes a child of God and God the Father of man. Here the Precious Blood of Christ wipes out the sentence of death that the Father has pronounced over us. With fatherly love God here stoops down to His creature; and His creature looks up to Him with child-like love and confidence. Here we are in the immediate vicinity of the Savior Who condescended to be our Teacher in the holy art of prayer. Here we pray with Him to His Father in heaven and to ours. Here we feel better than ever that wondrous bond of brotherly love which unites us with Him and lifts us up to God. In virtue of His own authority, He permits us to turn to



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THE PATER NOSTER

“Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.” (John 16: 23.)

God with words that human boldness, might, and power would never have dared to use: "Our Father." Ah, how true it really is that if Jesus had not become our Brother, if in His great goodness He had not commanded us so to pray, it would never have occurred to anyone of us to address the almighty, eternal God with the sweet name of "Father."

But so much that is beautiful and inspiring has already been written about the Our Father that it is hardly possible to add anything new to it. Hence we merely make mention of it by way of a few simple reflections.

This prayer, which we all recite so often, has an unusually fair and attractive history. Hence it will not be at all amiss to recall it in part. Thus we will be urged to value it more highly and to love it ever more and more.

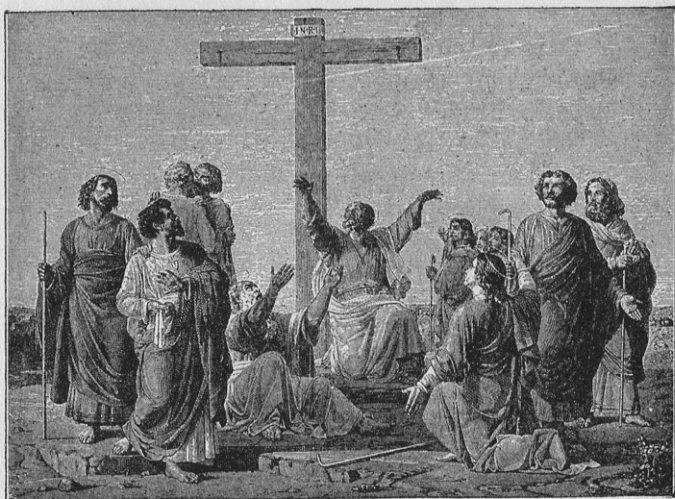
We may now ask: Where are we to seek the cradle of the Lord's Prayer? And what about its career adown the ages before it came to us?

The cradle of the Lord's Prayer, its origin? It was no other than the Divine Heart of Jesus. The Heart of Jesus overflows with love for God and for man. The Our Father was an outpouring of this love. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," the Savior said. So it was His Sacred Heart that presented to us the crowning prayer of all prayers. Never before had such a perfect prayer been heard on earth; never before had so perfect a prayer been sent to heaven.

The words of the Our Father were, so to speak, engraven deep in the hearts of the Apostles by the omnipotent voice of their divine Master and Teacher.

The Apostles

The hour of farewell struck for the disciples at the ascension of Christ into heaven. The time had come to carry to all nations the glad tidings of the Gospel, the teachings entrusted to them by the Master. After the descent of the Holy Ghost they went forth into the whole



THE PARTING OF THE APOSTLES

world. They were seen in all the lands of the then known earth. They took the Lord's Prayer along with them everywhere and prayed it ever and always. Ah, God alone knows how often they must have prayed from the very depths of their souls the sublime *Pater Noster*.

They prayed it face to face with proud, triumphant heathendom, in the face of the shameless idol worship of numerous peoples corrupted by the cult of Satan. They prayed it in the face of almost insurmountable diffi-

culties: hatred, enmity, and wickedness of all kinds; one day persecuted by tyrants that were more like wild beasts than like men; threatened the next by the murderous sword that flashed over their heads; now facing the rack and other instruments of torture prepared for them; again deafened by the roar of wild beasts that were hungry and starving and waiting impatiently for the prey of Christian bodies. With what fervor they must have prayed it then: with folded hands, eyes raised to heaven, voices trembling with emotion, and hearts full of firmest faith, and highest hope, and deepest love. They prayed it on their long journeyings by land and sea; in quiet seclusion; during anxious nights; in hardships and deprivations; in work and weariness; in heat and cold. And always they drew new strength and courage from the Lord's Prayer.

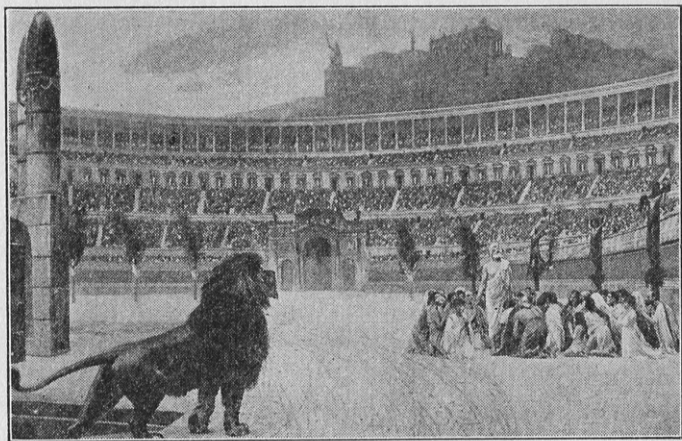
One after the other the Apostles were at last taken away from this world. As an inheritance they left this heavenly prayer to the martyrs who came after them.

The Martyrs

The martyrs! A host of heroes that bravely fought the good fight of the Faith for three long centuries! Unafraid and without hesitation they shed their blood, shed it in streams that prepared the way for the saving streams of the Precious Blood of Christ. The martyrs! Feeble old men and women, men in the prime of manhood, women in the bloom of womanhood, tender virgins, aye, and children even; Christian champions of every age, of every state and condition of life. But all looked upon themselves as children of God and one was their battle cry: *Pater noster! . . . Pater noster!* Thus they cried to each other in jubilation of heart and thus they cried to heaven. Yes; "Our Father!"

The Early Christians

In the mysterious passages of the catacombs; in private houses and palaces enveloped in secrecy and hiddenly turned into churches and chapels; and in the presence of vast gatherings of people, a good hundred thousand in number, a bloodthirsty audience that crowded the galleries of a Colosseum to sate their lust for blood and to see our holy martyrs crushed by the terrific paws and torn to shreds by the ripping teeth of lion and leopard;



THEY SUFFERED DEATH FOR CHRIST

ah, how stirring the words that broke from their lips then, the sweet words, *Pater noster, qui es in coelis!* "Our Father, Who art in heaven!"

How exalted, how supernaturally beautiful is not the martyrdom of the Christians when we consider that in return for words of hatred and barbarous cruelty they had naught but a prayer of brotherly love; when we consider that, all-embracing in this love, they strove with

their own blood to make of persecutors and persecuted one only sacrifice, in order to offer it to God with the words: "Our Father . . . Thy kingdom come . . . come to us all, also to these pagans, our persecutors."

No sooner had the age of persecution passed than the Church laid aside her garb of mourning. She began to sow the earth with churches and mighty cathedrals. Everywhere she unfolded the splendor of her solemn liturgical worship of God. And in every place where she built a house of God there straightway resounded the attractive, stirring, magnificent melody of the Our Father.

The popes reigning in the tiara's pomp and splendor, whether oppressed by the crushing trials and cares of their apostolic office or filled with joy and enthusiasm at the conquest of new fields to holy Faith; Fathers and Doctors of the Church in their arduous study of Christian learning and their tireless efforts for the spread of Catholic teaching from pulpit and chair; apologists in strife with heresies more to be feared than the sword of the pagan persecutor: all had the same prayer in common, all prayed exactly as the Apostles and the martyrs had prayed: "Our Father . . ."

The Saints

And then the saints! Some devoted themselves to the service of the altar. Clad in the stole of the priesthood, they spent their lives in the tabernacle's shadow. Others lived holy lives in the cloister, engaged in the practice of exalted virtue, striving for the attainment of the highest perfection. Others, again, retired into the solitudes of the desert, there to breathe the pure air of higher things, their souls free from the dust of the earth and elevated far above the inanities of this world. Still others sought

refuge in secluded valleys, enclosed by thorns, where the odor of lilies perfumed the air. They bore the double crown of innocence and suffering, an image of the spotless Lamb that sacrifices itself for the sins of others. But everywhere, at the altar, in the cloister, in the desert, in the hidden valleys of lilies, the saints sang love's divine song of praise; and the fairest stanza therein was and is the *Pater noster*.

Our Catholic People

And this mighty array of Christian heroes is followed by the vast multitude of souls who walk the common way of Christian life, who apparently do not attain to any remarkable degree of perfection, who live in all simplicity and bravely and tirelessly carry on the holy combat for virtue. For these, too, the first and the dearest prayer is the Our Father. Often they scarcely find time to converse with God in longer prayer. A few minutes in the morning and a few more in the evening is perhaps all the time they can devote to prayer; but among the prayers they do say there is always one precious pearl: the Our Father.

What is the slogan of our good Catholic people in general? In all their sufferings and spiritual combats, in the midst of toil and anxiety for their daily bread, in sicknesses and in trials of every kind, in all the bitter afflictions and disappointments of human life their slogan is one: "Our Father!" And never does the Catholic devoutly say the Lord's Prayer but depression and sadness are driven away, or are at least lessened to make room for new and greater joys.

Past sufferings may be forgotten, and hours of joy, anything and everything in life may be forgotten; but a Catholic can never forget the Our Father that he learned

at the knees of a good and pious mother. That dear prayer of his childhood remains indelibly impressed upon his memory. It is the grandest prayer of his faith.

During the twenty centuries of its existence this prayer has been celebrating an unceasing triumphal march. It has passed through all the souls that the Savior's Blood has sanctified and adorned. It has come to all the hearts that have ever been penetrated by the power of that Precious Blood and that have put all their hopes upon it. Virginal purity, penance, humility, love of the neighbor, zeal for the things of God,—in a word, all the blossoms of virtue that spring from Christian soil owe a debt of thanks to the strength of this prayer.

Thus it has come down through the long centuries to us, and in its coming has lost none of the heavenly freshness given it by Jesus. On the contrary, it has been permeated on its long, victorious course with the precious odor of virtues, and has thus, if that be possible, become all the more attractive and dear to us.

Such a gem may not be missing in any liturgical prayer. The Our Father must everywhere occupy the first place, and above all in the Mass, the most exalted rite of Holy Church. And that is why the Church and the people now rejoice and in tones of jubilation cry out to the Father with the Savior Who is here present:

Pater noster!

“Our Father, Who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.”

As often as this prayer falls from your lips, remember its divine origin, O Catholic people, and its glorious, its thrilling history.

CHAPTER 18

MADE THE FOOD OF EARTHLY PILGRIMS

The Prayer: "Deliver Us, We Beseech Thee"

This prayer is a very ancient appendix to the Our Father. Its earnest plea for deliverance from evils, and its yearning for peace, suggest the early days of persecution.

WE HAVE now come to that second of the two principal parts of the Mass, the Communion. Both priest and people stand in need of peace; and under the influence of the concluding words of the Lord's Prayer the priest, with many sacred ceremonies, secretly says this beautiful prayer:

"Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and to come; and by the intercession of the blessed and glorious Mary, ever a Virgin, Mother of God, and of Thy holy Apostles Peter and Paul, of Andrew, and of all the saints, graciously grant peace in our days, that through the help of Thy bountiful mercy we may always be free from sin and secure from all disturbance. Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen."

What a wonderful thing, to be delivered from all evils, past, present, and to come, from *all*, hence also from corporal and material evils! Who could imagine greater good fortune than that? Holy Mother Church, ever solicitous for our well-being, has us say a special prayer for this grace at the very feet of the sacrificial Lamb.

But not only temporal evils are to be understood here. No; the evil of all evils is especially meant: sin, the greatest of evils, the sorest of afflictions, which leaves so much

misery in its wake and is the cause of untold punishment in time and in eternity. The Church sees that our happiness is jeopardized. And, therefore, at this part of the Mass she implores for us a superabundance of graces and blessings. The priest pleads for peace in our days; he prays that we may always be free from all sin and secure from all disturbance.

Peace is synonymous with happiness; for perfect peace contains within itself all good. In peace the soul enjoys undisturbed repose; inordinate passions are subdued; and God's protecting hand wards off from it all the misfortune into which the world and the devil would fain precipitate it. Enveloped in this atmosphere of peace, the soul finds prayer so easy, virtue so lovely, the cross so light, heaven so attractive and inviting! In the consciousness of being at peace with God the soul revels in the delights of a peace that surpasses all understanding. Such a soul seems already now to breathe the pure air of heaven, seems already now to live the life of Paradise. It is a foretaste of the life to come!

The Breaking of the Host

The Gospel narrative speaks of Our Lord breaking the bread before He gave it to His disciples: "Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples." "And taking bread, He gave thanks and brake, and gave to them."

So, too, in the account of the apostles at Emmaus: "Whilst He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed and brake," etc. The expression "breaking of bread" came to have a special meaning among the first Christians. It was the term for the Lord's Supper. There is an interesting reference to Sunday Mass in the Acts (20:7): "And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread," etc.

When the priest breaks the Sacred Host he places a small particle in the chalice. This mixture of the two consecrated elements signifies the resurrection of Our Lord.

A mysterious rite of sublime signification is taking place upon the altar. But a while ago everything bespoke the Savior's sacrificial death; now His glorious resurrection is called to mind. Condensing the content



CHRIST APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES

“Now when it was late, that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: ‘Peace be to you.’” (John 20: 19.)

of the prayer He has just whispered, the priest addresses this wish to the people: *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*—“May the peace of the Lord be with you always.” And he takes the Savior in his hands, and breaks the

Host into three parts, and lets one part fall into the precious Blood of Christ within the chalice. The Flesh and Blood of the immortal Son of God are thus united! And as he drops the particle into the chalice the priest silently says:

“May this commingling and consecrating of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ avail us who receive it unto life everlasting. Amen.”

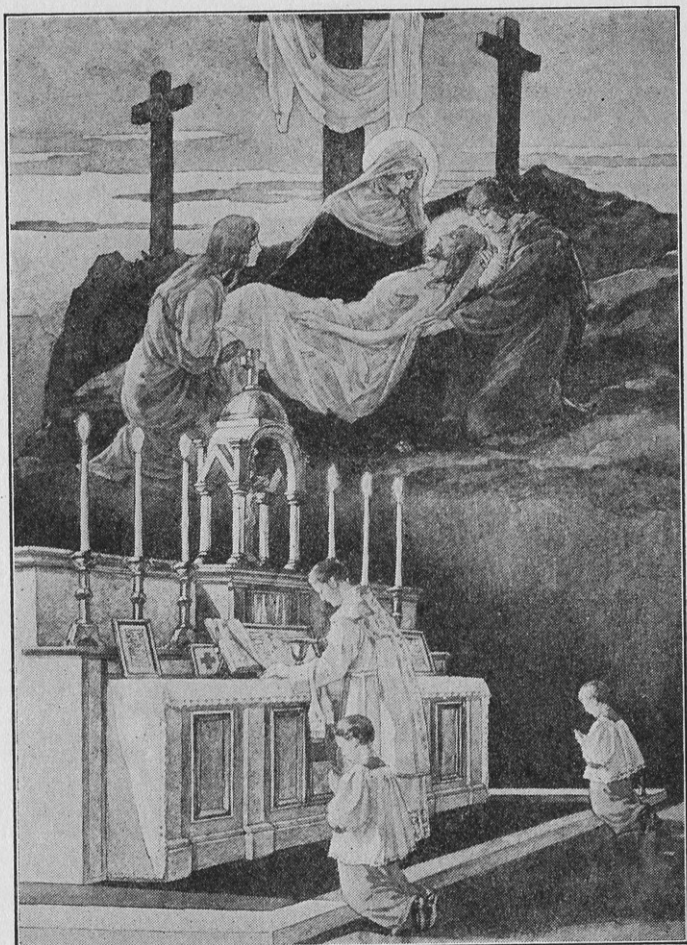
Yes; peace be with you! As though the risen Savior were suddenly appearing among the assembled faithful, even as once He suddenly appeared in the midst of His Apostles, the doors being closed, and said to them: *Pax vobis!*—“Peace to you!” Does He not address to us the same words He then addressed to His Apostles? A particle of the sacred Host drops into the chalice: the Savior’s sacred Body is united with His precious Blood—a vision of the glorious resurrection!

Thus come to a close the devout dialogues that repeatedly took place between priest and people during Holy Mass. And thus come to an end also the prayers which the priest has thus far addressed exclusively to the eternal Father. He bids farewell to God the Father, as it were, in order to give all his attention to the Savior now.

The Agnus Dei

There is infinite tenderness in this triple appeal to our slain Lord. He is the Lamb of God of Whom the prophets spoke so vividly: “I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim.” “He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.”

He is the Lamb Whom John the Baptist pointed out: “Behold



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THE AGNUS DEI

“Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the World.” (John 1: 29.)

the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world.”

This formula of prayer, taken in part from Holy Scripture, has a wealth and profundity of meaning. In the first place, it discloses the entire sublimity of the nature and mission of Christ—in the second place, it exalts the sin-effacing, world-redeeming powers and efficacy of His sacrificial death. Finally, it contains a humble, sorrowful, contrite appeal for mercy, and for the obtaining of peace.

The priest and Jesus are alone now, united in the tender intimacies of prayer and love. The priest bows low over his dear sacred Host; he contemplates it; with the eye of faith he penetrates the lovely appearances and sees hidden therein the Lamb of God. “Lamb of God,” he twice cries out, “Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.” And a third time: “... grant us peace.”

O Lamb of God, soon to become the food of our souls, full of all goodness and mildness, gladly forgiving and forgetting all the hurt done to You, come to us laden with mercy, bring unto us heavenly peace.

Who but the Savior could bring peace to the priest? And, ah, how sorely he stands in need of it in his apostolic labors! How utterly discouraging the calling of the priest, how empty and joyless his life, were he to be deprived of the Lamb of God upon the altar, did he not possess the priceless treasure of the Mass.

Truly, the work with which the priest is heavy laden, and the thorn crowns that are woven for him, and the crosses that are fashioned, were oftentimes crushing, indeed, had he not the happiness of calling the Christ down upon the altar every day and of bearing the Savior in his hands. Just this is what enables him to surmount all obstacles and to struggle bravely on.

The Three Communion Prayers

They follow the Agnus Dei and were originally of private devotion. During the Middle Ages they were made official. Since the priest addresses himself to Our Lord, the rubric tells him to fasten his gaze on the Consecrated Host. He asks for the Church peace and unity, for himself pardon of his sins and the grace of fidelity to the commandments, and finally he implores that the Communion he is about to receive may be a safeguard for soul and body and not the cause of his condemnation.

And now he speaks to Jesus from the fullness of a heart into which that Jesus is about to enter; for Christ is coming to visit His ambassador soon. And whereof does he speak to Him? Still occupied with thoughts of the peace for which he has pleaded, he implores God to grant this same grace to that which is to him the dearest thing on earth, to his Mother, the holy Catholic Church: to the Church through whom and for whom he stands at the altar here; to the Church that is so bitterly assailed by her enemies throughout the world and therefore expects all the more from the fidelity and self-sacrifice of the priest; to the Church that adorned him with the stole of the priesthood, and bestowed upon him a wondrous supernatural power, and gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven,—the Church that has ever been the object of all his pride and all his love,—the Church that is truly a Mother to him. She is a Queen that wears a diadem of virtues most precious: the crown of sanctity. It is but natural, then, that here his fervent prayer should first be for his Mother. And, bowed low, he thus prays in silence:

“O Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst say to Thine Apostles, ‘Peace I leave you, My peace I give you,’ look not upon my sins but upon the faith of Thy Church, and vouchsafe to grant her peace and unity according to Thy will. Who livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.”

Thereupon he says the second prayer before Communion. How touching it is!

“Lord Jesus Christ,” he secretly prays, ‘Son of the living God, Who, according to the will of the Father, through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world: deliver me by this Thy most sacred Body and Blood from all my iniquities, and from every evil. Make me always cleave to Thy commandments and never suffer me to be separated from Thee, Who with the same God the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.’”

He beseeches the Divine Savior to deliver him from all his sins and from every other evil. He begs for the strength to be true to His commandments, for the grace “never to be separated” from him—*numquam separari a te!* Never to be separated from Jesus—what a stirring and expressive phrase! How full of meaning! But, ah! how the heart of a good priest must ache when he thinks of the unhappy ones who have turned away from Jesus. And that is why the angels who surround the altar at Holy Mass often enough find the pearl of a tear in his eye—and in their golden chalice they bring it to God as an expression of the heartfelt sorrow and fervent supplication of His devout representative.

And alas! before the mind of the celebrant here there arise at times the faces and the names of such as were not true to the *Numquam separari a te*, most miserable of creatures, who were unfaithful to the highest of all callings and the noblest and fairest of all vocations; who violated their sacred vows and hesitated not to drag in the mire a stole for which even the angels of heaven might well have envied them; unhappy souls who succumbed to the difficulties of their sacred office, who were led astray by an enticing and deceitful world and brought to a deplorable fall. How have the exalted fallen!

Perhaps he personally knew one or the other of these poorest of all poor sinners. And at this part of the Mass, in intimate converse with Jesus, he cannot conceal his agitation. But at the same time also a strange feeling of fear creeps over him. Unconsciously he asks himself whether perhaps such a misfortune will overtake him some day, whether God will withdraw His grace from him . . . Hence his fervent prayer. Hence his tears.

Oh, we will let him weep. Let him pray. But let us pray with him that Jesus may hear his prayer. Let us beseech the Savior ever to keep our priests devout and good, ever zealous in His love and in His grace, and holy to the end.

And now comes the priest's third prayer before Communion. Still bowed low before the altar, he continues:

"Let not the partaking of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, all unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but through Thy loving kindness may it be to me a safeguard and remedy for soul and body. Who, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen."

In this prayer, too, there is a suggestion of holy fear in the heart of the priest. Also for him Holy Communion can be a cause of damnation, should he force the Savior to enter into a soul desecrated by mortal sin. He knows it well and trembles at the thought. To be damned! Damned as a priest! To be condemned by his Jesus, Whom he had served faithfully for so many long years, for Whom he had so bravely carried the cross, for Whom he had even made heroic sacrifices, to Whom he had given his whole heart! Were that not truly terrible? Ah, pitiable priest, what a fate for you, were this terrible possibility to become an actual reality—indeed, were this awful thought only to cling to your soul!

And therefore he bends low, his eyes upon the sacred Host, the sacrificial Lamb of love and benignity, and his heart within it. He beseeches the Savior Jesus Christ that the partaking of His Body and Blood may not be to his judgment and condemnation but through His infinite loving kindness may be a safeguard and remedy of soul and body and may be conducive to his spiritual welfare.

The Priest's Communion

Before receiving his Divine Master, the priest cries out in words that all can hear: "O Lord, I am not worthy," etc. These words are full of faith and humility. When first spoken by the humble centurion they merited the admiration of Christ Himself. They betoken the contrite and humble heart that God will not despise. And so when the priest has received the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, he turns to the people, blesses them and repeats in their name, "O Lord, I am not worthy," etc., whereat they beat their breasts in acknowledgment.

Thereupon he takes the Savior into his hands. "I will take the bread of heaven and call upon the name of the Lord," he whispers trustingly. He will not let Him go again until he has placed Him on his tongue and his God is in his heart. But is he worthy of honor and grace so excessive, so exceedingly great? Oh, no; and he knows it but too well; and he also acknowledges it aloud before all heaven and the assembled people. With the centurion in the Gospel he exclaims: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." "Lord, I am not worthy!"—three times he repeats it.

But even as of old the centurion indeed made public acknowledgment of his unworthiness and yet at the same time gave evidence of his deep faith, so that Jesus went to his house and worked a wonder there, so also here at the altar the priest gives evidence of the same deep faith

and the Savior manifests the same willingness to help, the same divine condescension.

The priest confesses: "O Lord, I am not worthy." Then he says: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." And straightway Jesus enters into the heart of him who is at the same time His servant and His ambassador, there to work miracles of grace and mercy. The divine Lamb of sacrifice becomes the sacrificial banquet of priest and people: *Factus cibus viatorum*. "Made the food of travellers" to the heavenly home.

Having received Communion under the species of bread the priest, after a moment's silent adoration, asks himself: *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?*—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered unto me?" It is a question which all should ask after receiving Holy Communion. He has asked the question. And now the Church has the priest give an answer which all good Catholics should likewise remember and take well to heart: *Calicem salutaris accipiam*—"I will take the chalice of salvation and will call upon the name of the Lord. With high praises will I call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from all mine enemies." It is especially by Holy Communion that I will thank my God for Holy Communion and for all that He has done for me. He speaks the words, "May the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." Then he takes into his hand the chalice containing the precious Blood and again receives the Savior.

It is clear, then, that the worthiest and most beautiful thanksgiving for a Holy Communion received is another Holy Communion. Let every loyal Catholic think of this after having received Communion and make the

Savior this promise: "In thanksgiving for this great grace and for all the good that God has done to me I will again approach the Holy Table as soon as I possibly can."

The Ablution Prayers

Having drained the chalice of its precious content, the priest breathes a prayer to the Lord that His gift may have enduring effects in our souls. While saying the prayer, he rinses the chalice with a little wine. Presently he goes to the epistle side of the altar and receives from the servers a small quantity of wine and water, which they pour over his fingers. Meanwhile he prays that no stain of sin may remain in him whom pure and holy mysteries have refreshed.

The priest now says two other expressive prayers while rinsing the chalice:

"Into a pure heart, O Lord, may we receive the heavenly food which has passed our lips; bestowed upon us in time, may it be the healing of our souls for eternity."

And again:

"May Thy Body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy Blood, which I have drunk, cleave to mine inmost parts; and do Thou grant that no stain of sin remain in me, whom pure and holy mysteries have refreshed. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen."

The Savior has been offered up to God; His mission as sacrificial Lamb has been accomplished. He is no longer present upon the altar stone now; the sacramental species have been consumed, withdrawn from our eyes.

The Eternal Father, Who ever remains the victor in the wondrous contest of His loving kindness with men, could not remain sole victor here; for here man offered Him Jesus, and the Eternal Father, God Almighty and Creator though He be, simply cannot give back to man a

greater gift than man has given Him. It is impossible even for a God to find anything greater and holier than Jesus. The Savior, though man, is also God; and God cannot give more than Himself in Whom are all things else.

The union between God and man, just completed in Holy Mass, is perfect. More perfect it could not be. The heart of God is wholly content and all its demands acknowledged; and the heart of the faithful Christian is filled with joy and bliss.

At this moment of Holy Communion there remains one only thing for the devout Catholic to do: let him fold his hands upon his breast; in all reverence and with holy fervor let him press to his grateful heart this object of his burning love, this pledge of his eternal glory; in his happiness and joy let him direct his gaze to heaven and let him there read in the eyes of God that the Almighty no longer looks down upon him as an angry Jehovah but as an infinitely good and loving Father, as a Creator propitiated and a Judge appeased.

Yes; Holy Mass is in very truth the golden bridge that unites heaven and earth, God and man, time and eternity.

CHAPTER 19

ITE, MISSA EST

Ite, Missa Est

Literally, "Go, it is the dismissal." These words were used until the 12th century to conclude the Mass. The beautiful prayer: "May the lowly homage," etc., was originally of private devotion. Its petition to God to make the Sacrifice useful for priest and people, became in time official. The blessing was introduced about the 10th century, but the older custom of not blessing the people at all is yet kept up in Masses for the dead.

The Gospel of St. John

No nobler words could be found to close the Sacrifice of the Mass than the sublime and inspired expression of the Disciple whom Jesus loved. From the earliest days of the Faith, this Gospel has been held in the highest veneration. Pius V, in the 16th century, realizing how very much the people cherished it, inserted it in the Missal which was drawn up by his orders.

Deo Gratias

At the end of the Gospel the server responds: "Thanks be to God." The last words of the Gospel of St. John declare: "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us"; whereupon priest and people bend in adoration. In very deed has the Word been made Flesh in the Mass. He dwells among us in the Sacrament of the Altar. How meet it is, then, that we breathe this fervent *Deo Gratias*, this thanksgiving from the bottom of our hearts for the unspeakably holy privilege of being present at the new Bethlehem and the new Calvary.

NOW, after the Communion, the priest says a few short prayers called the Post-communions, corresponding in number and kind to the Collects and the secret prayers of the Mass: *Oremus*—"Let us pray."

Thereafter, having again given the people the wondrous greeting, *Dominus vobiscum*—"The Lord be with you," he announces to the faithful that the Mass is at an end. *Ite, Missa est*—"Go, the Mass is finished." ("Go, it is the dismissal.")

Then, bowing down over the altar, he says this touching prayer:

"May the lowly homage of my service be pleasing to Thee, O most holy Trinity; and do Thou grant that the Sacrifice which I, all unworthy, have offered up in the sight of Thy majesty may be acceptable to Thee, and, because of Thy loving-kindness, may avail to atone to Thee for myself, and for all those for whom I have offered it up. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Thereupon he blesses the people:

"May almighty God bless you,—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." He then reads the last Gospel and leaves the altar.

Ended, Yet Ever Going On

Yes; this Mass is at an end. *Ite, missa est*. And yet, without interruption the Holy Sacrifice is continually celebrated. The faithful, indeed, see this priest leave the altar; but a host of other priests in turn ascend the altars of Holy Church. Day and night, round the circle of the earth, they succeed each other in the service of the Most High and, without ever an interruption anywhere, they offer the adorable Sacrifice from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. That is why Holy Mass can be called that sacred rite of the Catholic Church which ceases never and goes on forevermore.

Would that the faithful who assist at Holy Mass would bear this truth in mind and make it a point also to hear Mass without interruption. It is simple and easy to do that. One need only have the desire of assisting at

all the Holy Masses that are offered up throughout the world and devoutly make the intention of assisting at them in spirit. Or one may unite oneself in spirit with those priests who are just now offering the adorable Sacrifice. Somewhere some are always offering. This can be done while at work or in moments of rest or recreation; at home or on the streets or in the fields; by day and by night; in joy and in sorrow; whether one craves special graces for oneself or for others.

Ite, missa est. You may go; the sacred action is finished; Holy Mass has been offered up. You are dismissed!

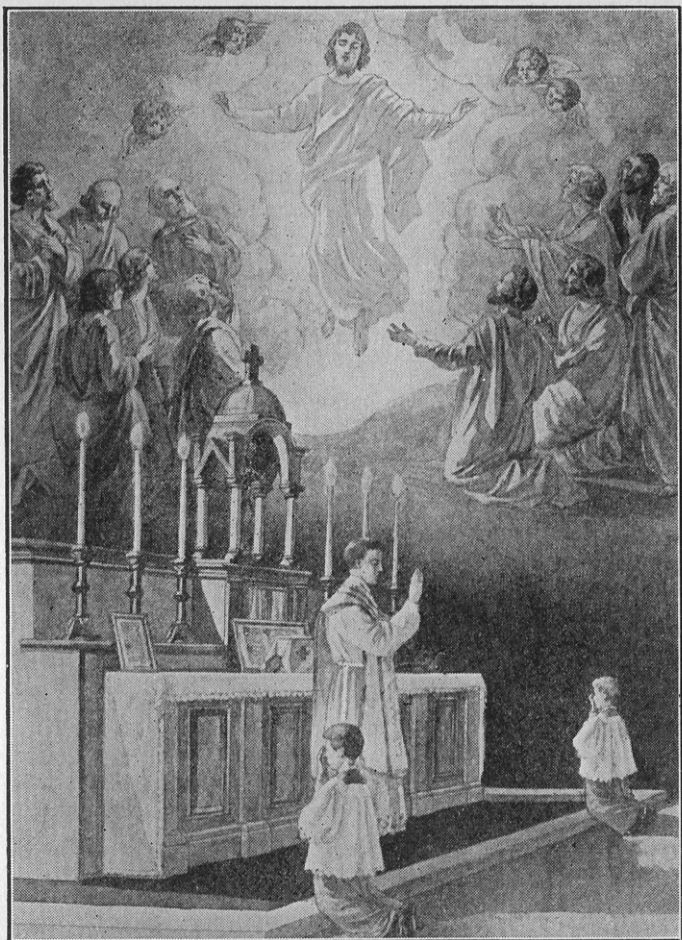
But, as we have already said, before the devout assembly breaks up, the priest gives them the blessing.

The Priest's Blessing

What a precious thing this blessing is! With lips still moist with the Blood shed on Calvary and with the divinity of Christ in his heart, the priest turns to bless the people. "May almighty God bless you,—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." In the name of the Most Holy Trinity the Mass began; in the name of the Most Holy Trinity it comes to an end.

In virtue of his office the priest gives his blessing on many and various occasions, but never in so supernatural an atmosphere as here. He is, as it were, another Moses, descending transfigured from the holy mountain, from Mount Calvary, in this instance, and bringing the glad tidings anxiously awaited during the course of thousands of years.

Prior to the solemn hour of the Savior's death, God had never blessed the earth with a blessing such as this. But once our spotless Lamb of God had sacrificed Himself, quite other sentiments surged within the Father's



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THE BLESSING

“And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, that He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven.” (Luke 24: 51.)

heart. He is now appeased, full of joy and satisfaction. God again looks upon the human race as His Own dear children. And the blessing which heretofore His justice had withheld from the earth that lay under an awful curse now descends upon it again. Here in Holy Mass it comes down upon the assembled faithful in all its plenitude and accompanies them as they go their various ways.

The faithful leave the church and return to their daily duties; once more they resume life's battles, only too often prolonged and intense. But let the combat thicken—it matters not. They have taken new courage; and God now accompanies them, stands at their side, does battle for them: because they accompanied His divine Son up Mount Calvary and there stood beneath the cross—in Holy Mass, that Sacrifice which is the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross, its unbloody renewal, its continuation.

O you good and pious souls who assist at Holy Mass so gladly and devoutly, never fear: God's blessing will not fail you. O you fathers and mothers, bravely and with the utmost confidence approach your heavy responsibilities in the upbringing of your children for God. It may often be hard; there may be thorns and crosses; shocking experiences and bitter disappointments may come your way. But do not lose heart. God is with you. It may be that seemingly your efforts are repaid only with ingratitude and failure. But the day will come when the Precious Blood of Golgotha, whose saving streams so often laved your souls in Holy Mass, will make for itself some secret, mysterious channel in order to reach the souls of your dear children gone astray. Then will the good seed, sown in their hearts by you, spring up, moistened by the Blood of Christ, and bring

forth fruit. That Blood will save them for heaven. Indeed, this is the key to the mystery of many an unexpected and extraordinary conversion.

So go back to your daily work with glad and happy hearts, O you simple, humble, trusting souls who must toil day after day for a wage that may be scarcely a living wage. And be sure of this: that early morning hour which your piety stole from your well earned rest, in order to offer it to God by hearing Holy Mass, is not lost. Ah no; it is your greatest gain. In the book of divine goodness God has noted each morning, after your name, that you have ever been prompt and punctual and zealous in the highest and best form of Divine Service. How true that it is the Mass that matters!

Also for you the evening of life will come sooner than you think. Those early morning trips to church will then be the most consoling of your life. They will bring you the reward of rare peace of heart, of happy quiet of conscience—a blissful calm that is an assurance of heaven as the shadows lengthen.

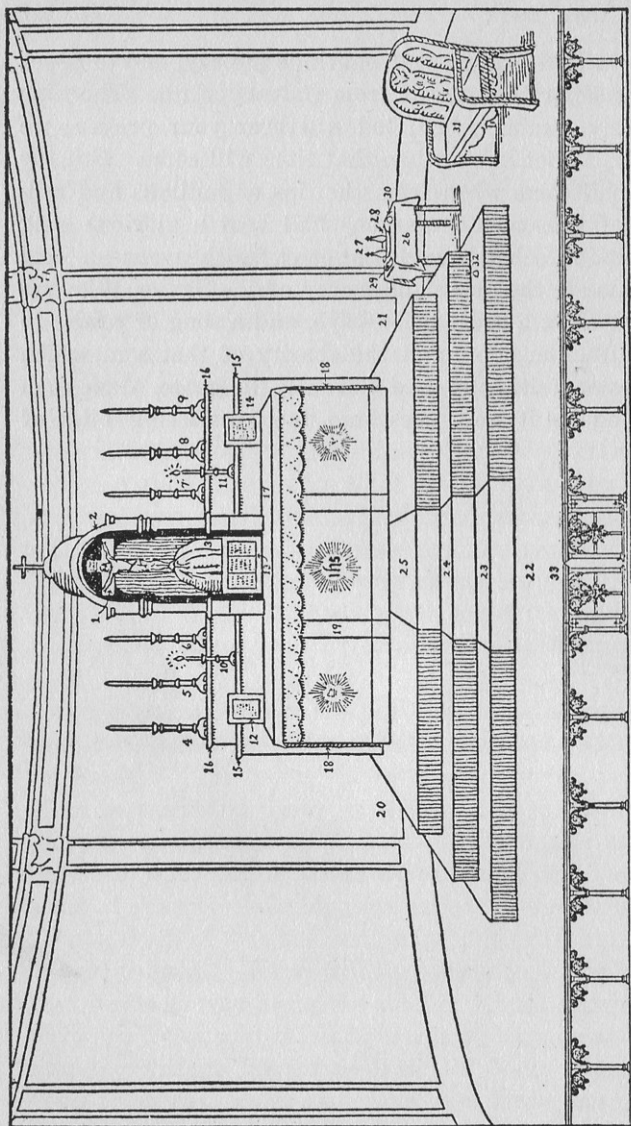
Then you will see that it was a high honor for you ever to follow in the footsteps of the despised, maltreated, unjustly accused, and innocently condemned Savior of the world; that it is an honor for every Catholic to toil in a workshop for his daily bread, because Jesus of Nazareth was thus engaged in lowly labor, because in the flight into pagan Egypt and afterwards at Nazareth He had to struggle with poverty and want. Only then will you fully appreciate the value of deprivations and humiliations of all kinds and learn to look upon them as rare gifts of the providence of God. For all these sacrifices, united with the divine Sacrifice upon the altar, are just that many gleaming jewels set in your heavenly crown.

From the Rising to the Setting of the Sun

As the sun in the heavens, so, too, Holy Mass casts upon the earth the fructifying rays of its light and its warmth. When the first faint light of dawn appears in the east, announcing to the world the coming of the king of day, lavish of blessings and fruitfulness—at that moment thousands and thousands of altars are transformed into just so many Calvaries. In majestic cathedrals, in simple village churches, in poor little chapels, under the portable tents of the missionary, thousands and thousands of Masses are read, each one of which makes of the altar a sun of grace. The sun in the heavens continues its onward course. Somewhere it is always rising; and as its light shines upon new coasts and new countries, new candle lights flicker upon new altars and the Mass continues its Eucharistic course. Within four and twenty hours it has brought the Precious Blood that was shed on the cross throughout all the regions of the earth, from east to west, from pole to pole.

Oh, when, when will the purblind world acknowledge the unspeakable treasures of the mercy and goodness of its Savior? The poor, harassed children of men are often so worn and weary, so thirsty and tired on their journey through the wilderness of this world; and yet they will continue to drink of the false and poisoned wells of deceptive earthly joys and they do not see the fountainhead of true and lasting happiness gushing forth so near to them! When will they find the heavenly road that winds its way along the sides of Mount Calvary, up to its very top, and infallibly leads to the one and only source of life, to the divine Heart of Jesus from which flows forth that blood and water that alone can quench all thirst?

O you God-fearing soul, continue to pray, and to hope; do not separate yourself from Calvary's hill. The time is surely coming when God will hear your prayer; we merely do not know when that time will come. But the day shall come when from the lips of millions and millions of ransomed souls you shall hear a glorious song of triumph echo through the empyreal heavens—a song of praise to the glory and mercy of the Savior Who has bought us at a great price—aye, and a song of praise to the faith, the hope, and the charity of that soul which was wont faithfully and devoutly to go to Mass each morning as it now goes into the everlasting bliss of heaven!



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THE ALTAR AND SANCTUARY

The different articles shown in this picture of the Altar and Sanctuary are numbered to agree with the number of their names in the list on the following page.

APPENDIX

BRIEF INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE ALTAR, THE SACRED VESTMENTS AND VESSELS USED AT HOLY MASS*

FURNITURE AND ARTICLES ON ALTAR AND IN SANCTUARY

Observe well the picture of the altar and sanctuary. It is here the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered up. This picture shows everything that is necessary for Mass, and gives the proper name of the furniture of the sanctuary.

1. Crucifix.
2. Canopy or Throne of the Altar.
3. Tabernacle covered by veil (wherever used the veil is of the color of the day or white).
- 4-9. Large Candlesticks (are lighted only for High Mass and Benediction).
- 10, 11. Small Candlesticks (are lighted only for Low Mass).
- 12, 13, 14. Altar Cards (the larger is in the center, containing prayers which the priest reads at the Offertory and Canon. The smaller one on the Epistle side has the prayers read by the priest when washing his hands after the Offertory. The other smaller one on the Gospel side has the Gospel of St. John, which is most frequently read at the end of Mass).
15. First Gradine or Candlebench for the smaller Candlestick.
16. Second Gradine or Candlebench for the larger Candlestick.
17. Mensa or Altar Table.
18. Altar Table Coverings (one wax and three linen cloths cover the altar table. The fourth or top one of linen frequently edged with lace hangs down over the side of the altar to the floor).

* The matter in this appendix is taken from "Catholic Ceremonies" by the Abbé Durand, also from "Read Mass with the Priest," by Rev. W. R. Kelly, contained in "New Missal for Every Day," by Father Lasance and from "How to Serve Low Mass," by Rev. W. A. O'Brien.

19. Antependium or Frontal (wherever customary a cloth of the color of the day hangs down in front of the altar).
20. Gospel Side of the Altar.
21. Epistle Side of the Altar.
22. Sanctuary Floor.
23. First Altar Step.
24. Second Altar Step.
25. Predella or Altar Platform (sometimes called the Footpace).
26. Credence Table.
27. Water and Wine Cruets.
28. Finger Basin.
29. Towel.
30. Communion Paten.
31. Sedilia or Priests' Bench.
32. Bell.
33. Communion Rail.

1. *The Altar*

Form of the Altar.—The Catholic altar has always been a table or a tomb. This double form has perpetuated through the ages the remembrance of the institution of the Eucharist and of the burial of Our Lord. The cloth that covered the table at the last supper, the winding-sheet of the Savior's embalming, are recalled to our love by the white linens spread upon it. The altar, the eucharistic table, the mystical tomb, is, above all, the holy mountain where Jesus transfigures and immolates Himself at the same time; raised as it is above the ground, it appears to us always as a Thabor and a Calvary. Happier we than the apostle, for we can make for ourselves there a perpetual dwelling-place, even in the Heart of the Divine Savior.

The Sacred Stone.—During the Mass the priest often kisses the middle of the altar. In this spot is a stone become, by the consecration of the bishop, a figure of Jesus Christ. Like the Word of God, it *has received*

the sacred unction; like Him, it bears the mark of five wounds, and these are also made by the hammer and iron; like the Lamb of God, of Whom "not one of the bones was broken" (Ex. 12:46), the sacred stone is entire, cut from a single piece. He who loves Our Lord will understand these kisses so often repeated; the Church wishes to make reparation during the Holy Sacrifice for all the outrages of the passion—the derisive genuflections of the Jews replaced by the genuflections of the priest; the perfidious kiss of treason, by the respectful kiss of love. In the sacred stone is enclosed a little tomb, sealed by the coat of arms of the bishop; with the relics of the saints are laid herein three grains of incense. Here again is a reminder of the burial, and the different perfumes which Jesus Christ then received from the piety of His disciples—the aromatic herbs of Joseph of Arimathea, of Magdalen, and the holy women.

Relics in the Altar or in the Altar Stone.—In his marvelous vision St. John saw "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God" (Apoc. 6:9). The Church militant, heir of their holy relics, has placed them under the altar of sacrifice. This custom, observed from the earliest days of Christianity, teaches us how we should receive Jesus Christ in holy Communion.

Our heart becomes an altar where Our Lord consummates His sacrifice, and upon this living altar He wishes to see the blessed wounds of a martyr. The saints have tasted in Communion ineffable sweetness; recompense, we may be sure, of the immolation which they made of themselves each day. It is easy for us to experience this; let us prepare ourselves for such a solemn act by the sacrifice of our tastes, of our passions, as the Hebrews ate the paschal lamb with bitter herbs. The Eucharist

will then bear in us the most abundant fruit; it will be the grain of wheat sown in our hearts, to grow there till the resurrection, the day of blossoming and of harvest, the heavenly wine, which maketh virgin those hearts inclined to evil; the divine fire, which will give to the weak the courage of the lion.

The Tabernacle.—The rich materials which cover the place where the Blessed Sacrament rests, even the name given it, recall the tabernacle of the Old Law, in which the ark of the covenant was kept, one of the prophetic figures of the sacrament of our altars. Its most ordinary form is that of a *tower*; this symbol of strength could not be more suitably employed than in sheltering Him Whom St. Augustine so well calls “the bread of the strong.”

The Cross.—Above the tabernacle is the cross. Its presence alone in this place speaks simply and eloquently: “It is here that Jesus Christ renews the sacrifice of Calvary. The cross raised by deicidal hands remains always laden; love forever fastens to it the divine Victim. His arms extended call the sinner to return and to pardon; His lips never cease to utter the great prayer of mercy, ‘Father, forgive them’; grace flows from His Heart in torrents.” Christian souls, all these things the crucifix, by its wounds, says to you each day.

Candles.—Doubtless they recall to us that the catacombs were the cradle of the Church and her first temple; that the divine mysteries were there celebrated by the light of torches. This touching reminder of the persecuted Church should not be lost sight of.

But if it were merely as a reminder of the bloody period of the Church’s martyrdom that candles were used, why demand wax for the altar-lights? The

anxiety of the Church on this point shows us that there is here some mystery. "Wax," says Msgr. de Cony, summing up the teaching of all the liturgists, "is one of the most expressive symbols furnished the Church by nature to express allegorically the holy humanity of Jesus Christ. The earliest Doctors dwell on the *virginity of the bees*, and the *purity* of that substance drawn from the nectar of the most exquisite flowers, and compare these things to the conception of the Savior in the pure womb of Mary. The whiteness of the wax, laboriously obtained, signifies again the glory of Jesus Christ, the result of His sufferings; then the flame, mounting from that column of wax which it consumes, is the divinity of Jesus Christ, manifesting itself by the sacrifice of His humanity, and illuminating the world." (Cerem. Rom., 1. i. c. 6.) It is not, then, to lighten the darkness of the sanctuary, let us say with St. Isidore, that the altar-candles are lighted, because the sun is shining, but this light is a sign of joy, and it represents Him of Whom the Gospel says: "He is the true light." (Orig., 1. i. c. 12.)

During the holy mysteries, when thick darkness clouds our souls, let us beg God, the eternal light, to scatter this gloomy night. If at the foot of this new Calvary our heart is indifferent and frozen, let us pray God, infinite love, to melt it in His fires. There will come a day when this blessed light will be, for those who have despised it, the fire of justice. O Lord, inspire my heart with such a profound horror of sin that I may escape the flames of Thy vengeance.

The Sanctuary Lamp.—In honor of Jesus Christ a lamp burns perpetually before the altar. The Christian soul longs to remain in constant adoration at the feet of Our Lord, there to be consumed by gratitude and

love. In heaven alone will this happiness be given to us, but here below, as an expression of our devout desires, we place a lamp in the sanctuary to take our place. In this little light St. Augustine shows us an image of the three Christian virtues. Its *clearness* is faith, which enlightens our mind; its *warmth* is love, which fills our heart; its *flame*, which, trembling and agitated, mounts upward till it finds rest in its center, is hope, with its aspirations toward heaven, and its troubles outside of God. (*Serm. lxvii, de Script.*)

May our heart watch in the sanctuary under the eye of God! During the labors of the day nothing is easier than to fly there in thought, to offer to Jesus Christ our pain, our weariness, our actions.

At night let us place ourselves at the feet of Jesus, and say: While I sleep I wish to love Thee and bless Thee always; here would I take my rest. If many Christians were faithful to this pious practice it would not be merely a faint and solitary lamp which would illumine the holy place, but thousands of hearts would shed there their sparkling rays of light.

Altar Candlesticks.—The heavenly Jerusalem has her sacrifice and also her altar. St. John thus describes it: "The altar of gold had seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst was the Son of man, shining like the snow by the whiteness of His garments, and more brilliant than the sun by reason of the splendor of His face" (*Apoc. i*).

It is, then, reminders of heaven which the Church constantly places before the eyes of her children; how can we help thinking of it when all around us speaks of it: the altar, the candlesticks, the Eucharist?

The Missal.—Upon the altar in heaven was also a mysterious book, sealed with seven seals, and which no

man could open. The lion of the tribe of Juda, Jesus Christ, came, and His triumphant hand broke the seals. The resemblance here is easily traced. The book which contains the prayers of the liturgy is placed upon the altar before the sacrifices, but it remains closed; only the priest, representing Jesus Christ, has the right to open it.

In the West Latin is the language of the liturgy of the Church. However, certain Greek words, such as *Kyrie eleison*, and some Hebrew expressions, like *alleluia*, *amen*, *sabaoth*, have been enshrined in this rich casket, that the language of the Christian sacrifice may recall the inscription placed above the Savior's cross, which was written, says the evangelist, in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin.

The Best Way of Assisting at Mass

“Of the many ways of assisting at Mass, says Bishop Riddel, the best way is that in which *each person*, by saying the words of the Missal more closely, allies himself with the priest who is celebrating.

“When the faithful thus act with the celebrant, and with the High Priest, Jesus Christ, then, indeed, is it true that they are, as St. Peter says, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

“If so, what a pity it is so few make use of the Missal!

“All books of devotion are good at Mass; it is quite right to say the rosary at Mass; but the Missal is preferable, being pre-eminently the product of the mind and heart of the Church, expressed with reverence and love for the divine Victim, Who day by day, in every part of the world, sacrifices Himself again for the glory of His Father, and for the salvation of souls.

“It is pre-eminently *the Book for Mass*, as its name implies, and nothing can exceed the beauty of the Collects and other prayers.

“Gladly, therefore, would I see the Missal in the hands of the faithful. The hearing of daily Mass, the love of the Church's liturgy, and the use of the Missal, will all help to a more thorough Catholic piety.”

2. The Chalice and Its Appurtenances



(a) *The Chalice*



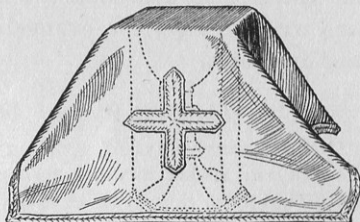
(b) *Chalice and Purificator*



(c) *Chalice, Purificator and host*



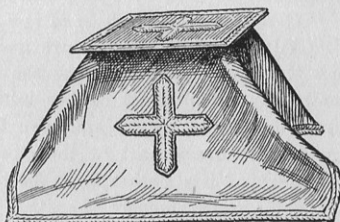
(d) *Chalice, Purificator, Paten and Pall*



(e) *All now covered by Chalice Veil—note the different parts under the Veil*



(f) *The Burse and the Corporal*



(g) *The Chalice completely covered*

The Chalice. (fig. a) To seal an alliance the ancients at the end of the banquet caused to be passed from one to another of the guests a cup to which each touched his lips. Our Lord followed this custom at the last supper. The chalice used at the altar is made upon the model of the one from which Jesus Christ drank on the eve of His death.

The Purificator. (fig. b) This is a linen cloth used for wiping the chalice, and the fingers and mouth of the celebrant after Communion. It is spread over the cup of the chalice.

The Paten. (fig. c) While the chalice receives the blood of Jesus Christ, the paten is reserved for His divine body. It is a large plate, of gold or silver like the chalice, but always golden in that portion which comes in contact with the Sacred Host. Like the chalice, before it is used in the sacred mysteries it is consecrated by chrism and special prayers said by the bishop. Let us receive from the gold, the holy chrism, and the particular benediction of the prelate given to those vessels upon which the Holy of holies rests but an instant, the lesson which the Church teaches us. In communion our hearts become living chalices; our tongue is another paten upon which the priest lays Jesus Christ. May Our Lord always find our tongue and heart bright with the gold of charity; let us consecrate this mystical chalice and paten with the unction of Christian sweetness and the perfume of prayer.

The Pall. (fig. d) This is a square pocket-shaped piece of linen with a cardboard inserted in order to stiffen it. It is placed over the chalice to prevent dust or other matter falling into it.

The Chalice Veil. (fig. e) This is the cloth which covers the chalice until the Offertory, and again after the

Communion. It also is made of the same material and color as the vestments.

The Burse and Corporal. (fig. f) The *Burse* is a square container for the corporal when the latter is not in use. It is made of the same material and color as the vestments. The *Corporal* is a square piece of linen. In size and appearance it resembles a small napkin. It is spread out on the altar, and the chalice is placed upon it. During the Mass the Sacred Host rests for a time on the Corporal.

3. *The Priestly Vestments*

By God's command the Jewish priests wore a distinctive garb when they ministered in the Temple. The Bible tells us they were vested in violet and purple, scarlet twice dyed, and fine linen. Gold and precious stones were also used to give the person of the priest that dignity demanded by his exalted office.

No special dress was at first prescribed for the Christian priesthood. During the early days the garments worn at the Holy Sacrifice were not dissimilar in form to the clothing of civilians. They were distinguished, however, from profane apparel in richness and beauty of decorations; and of course, their use was restricted to divine worship.

Secular fashion changed, but the Church clung to the old style. Thus it was that garments once common to all, presently became the privileged dress of the clergy. Faith then saw in each particular vestment a symbol relating to the Passion of Our Lord, and a reminder of some Christian duty.

The priest's vestments may be considered now: (a) According to their present use. (b) According to their historical origin. (c) According to their symbolism.

HOW THE PRIEST VESTS TO SAY MASS



(h) Priest in
Amice



(i) Priest in
Alb



(j) Priest ad-
justing the
Cincture



(k) Priest put-
ting Maniple on
left arm



(l) Priest with
the Stole



(m) Priest in
Chasuble is now
completely Vested

The Amice. (fig. h) The amice is a piece of fine linen in the form of an oblong. The priest places it for a moment on his head, and then allows it to rest upon his shoulders. As he does so he prays: "Place, O Lord, on my head the helmet of salvation, that so I may resist the assaults of the devil."

Historical Origin: A covering for the head and neck worn like a hood. When indoors it was lowered and thrown over the shoulders.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The linen cloth that the soldiers put over Our Lord's head; when thus blindfolded He was mockingly asked who struck Him.

(b) The helmet of Salvation. (Cf. Ephes. 6:17.)

The Alb. (fig. i) A wide linen robe reaching to the feet and covering the whole body. The vesting prayer is: "Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart; that being made white in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward."

Historical Origin: The alb, or tunic, was worn in ancient times by all who enjoyed any dignity.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The garment with which Herod clothed Our Lord. (b) Signifies the purity of conscience demanded of God's priest.

The Cincture. (fig. j) The cincture, or girdle, is a cord of linen fastened about the waist to confine the alb. The vesting prayer is: "Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me."

Historical Origin: Walking and active exertion made it necessary for one to gird up a long garment like the alb. Hence the cincture was an essential article of dress.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The cord that bound Our

Lord to the pillar when He was being scourged. (b) Symbolizes modesty, and also readiness for hard work in God's service.

The Maniple. (fig. k) A strip of silken cloth worn on the left arm of the priest. The vesting prayer is: "May I deserve, O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow in order that I may joyfully reap the reward of my labors."

Historical Origin: Originally a strip of linen worn over the arm. During the long services, and in the intense heat of southern countries its use was frequently necessary to wipe the perspiration from the face and brow.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The rope whereby Our Lord was led, and the chains which bound His sacred hands. (b) An emblem of the tears of penance, the fatigue of the priestly office and its joyful reward in heaven.

The Stole. (fig. l) A long band of silk of the same width as the maniple, but three times its length. It is worn around the neck and crossed on the breast. The vesting prayer is: "Restore to me, O Lord, the state of immortality which I lost through the sin of my first parents and, although unworthy to approach Thy Sacred Mysteries, may I deserve nevertheless eternal joy."

Historical Origin: A kind of neck-piece or kerchief; a part of the dress of the upper classes. It gradually became the distinctive mark of spiritual authority in the higher clerics, viz., the priest and deacon.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The cords with which Jesus was tied. Worn as it is over the shoulders, it reminds us, too, of the cross Our Lord carried. (b) A reminder of the yoke of Christ. The priest's burden is a heavy one, which Christ nevertheless makes sweet.

The Chasuble. (fig. m) The chasuble is the outer and chief vestment of the priest. It is essentially *the* Mass vestment and is now exclusively reserved to the priest. The vestment is familiar to all by reason of the cross usually embroidered on it. The vesting prayer is: "O Lord, who hast said, 'My yoke is sweet and My burden light,' grant that I may so carry it as to merit Thy grace."

Historical Origin: Imagine a large circular cloth with a hole cut in the center for the head. This will help one to visualize the ancient chasuble, which was an immense cloak, without opening in front, and without sleeves. It was put on over the head and completely enveloped the body. When it was necessary to use the hands, the garment had to be folded up on each side over the arms. Because of its inconvenience (for two assistants were needed to manipulate it), the vestment was gradually cut and altered until it now has its present shape.

Symbolic Reference: (a) The purple cloak worn by Our Lord when He stood before Pilate. (b) An emblem of love. When the ordaining bishop gives it to the new priest, he says: "Receive the priestly garment, for the Lord is powerful to increase in you love and perfection."

4. *Vestments of the Deacon, Subdeacon, and Acolytes*

The Deacon. This word means servitor. One of the principal duties of this sacred minister is to assist the priest during the holy mysteries. He is always at his side, and, by the place of honor which he occupies, he reminds us of the Beloved Disciple leaning on the Heart of Jesus during the last supper, and standing under the cross on Calvary.

The deacon chants the Gospel, and dismisses the people at the end of Mass by intoning: "*Ite, missa est.*"

His vestments are the amice, girdle, stole and *dalmatic*; except the latter, all have already been explained.

The Dalmatic. It was originally worn at Dalmatia, whence it was brought to Rome. It is a long and ample garment, with very large but short sleeves, descending only to the elbow. From the second century among the Romans it was the vestment of the emperors; the Church adopted it for the Sovereign Pontiff and the bishops. The deacons received it from Pope Sylvester, but the privilege of wearing it was confined to the deacons of the Church at Rome, and for them only granted on festival-days as a sign of joy; consequently, it was laid aside during Advent, Lent, and fast-days, periods of sadness and mourning in the Church.

The dalmatic is of the same color as the chasuble of the priest.

The bands on the dalmatic are of rich stuff, or even of gold or silver, which are laid perpendicularly on each side. They were, in ancient times, reserved to persons of distinction. We find them again upon the chasuble of the priest, the dalmatic of the deacon, and the tunic of the subdeacon, because of the elevated rank which these sacred ministers hold in the hierarchy; their duties bring them near to Our Lord in the Eucharist, and by the chastity which they have irrevocably sworn they are become like heavenly spirits. The short sleeves of the dalmatic, allowing the deacons to move more easily, remind us that, according to the etymology of their name of servitor, they assist not only the priest at the altar, but the poor, the widows, and orphans. They find also in the large sleeves of their vestment a lesson of liberality toward the poor. The deacon does not wear the stole

in the same manner as the priest; he places it on the left shoulder, and brings the extremities under the right arm. The stole being formerly a robe, the deacon necessarily had to roll it up under the right arm in order more easily to serve the priest at the altar.

The Subdeacon. This minister is charged with the preparation of the sacred vessels, the bread and wine of the sacrifice, giving the water to the celebrant when he washes his hands, and reading the epistle. His vestments are the amice, alb, girdle, maniple, and tunic. The tunic was formerly distinguished from the dalmatic by its form and material; now it is in all respects like it, hence it is unnecessary to speak of it.

The Acolytes. (Altar boys). The ministers who carry the candles, prepare the incense, and serve the subdeacon and deacon at the altar are called acolytes. Samuels of the new law, they always wear in their functions a linen robe. Are they not also angels upon the earth? Their white vestments, the flowing sleeves with which they are adorned, like two wings; the censer swinging in their hands; their comings and goings in the sanctuary—do they not recall the celestial spirits around the throne of the Lamb? The white vestment of the acolytes is called a surplice, and covers a cassock, generally black.

This striking contrast has not escaped the interpreters of our ceremonies, who have given us its meaning. Nearly all the Religious Orders have adopted for their habit black or white, in remembrance of the glorious or sorrowful mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. These two colors, united in the costume of the young levite, illustrate the great motto of Christianity: To die to one's self, and live again in Jesus Christ.

5. *The Colors of the Vestments*

There are five liturgical colors: White, Green, Red, Purple and Black.

White is the symbol of purity. It is used on all feasts of Our Lord except those relating to His sufferings; on feasts of Our Lady; on the feasts of saints that are not martyrs.

Red is the figure of blood and fire. The Church assigns it to the feasts of the martyrs and apostles; to Pentecost Sunday; to feasts connected with the Passion of Our Lord.

Green is the symbol of hope. It is used on the Sundays after Pentecost and on the Sundays from Epiphany to Septuagesima.

(The Sacred Congregation of Rites permits the use of gold vestments instead of red, white or green, provided the material be of pure cloth of gold.)

Violet, the penitential color, is used during Lent and Advent and on the Vigils of the greater feasts. (Vestments of rose color may be worn in place of violet on two days during the year: the third Sunday of Advent, called *Gaudete Sunday*; and the fourth Sunday of Lent, called *Laetare Sunday*.)

Black, the sign of mourning, is used on Good Friday, and in Masses of the Dead.

6. *High and Low Mass*

High Mass. A Mass which is celebrated by a priest, assisted by deacon and subdeacon, with all the solemnity of chant, incense and full ceremonial. This is commonly referred to as a Solemn High Mass.

Low Mass. A Mass which is said by a priest alone, with one or two servers, and is a shortened or simplified form of the High Mass.

Missa Cantata. The so-called *sung Mass*, or *Missa Cantata*, is a modern compromise between a Low and a High Mass. According to Fortescue, "It is really a Low Mass, since the essence of High Mass is not the music, but the deacon and subdeacon." At a *Missa Cantata* the ceremonies are somewhat abbreviated because of the absence of the sacred ministers; incense is not permitted, and the celebrant himself sings the Gospel in the deacon's stead.

7. *The Asperges*

The Asperges. This word is from the Latin *aspergere*, to wash or sprinkle. The *Asperges* is a rite at least fifteen centuries old, which precedes the principal Mass on Sunday. It is performed by the celebrant of the Mass, who sprinkles the congregation with holy water while reciting a verse from Psalm 50: "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow" (v. 8). At Eastertide there is substituted for this versicle the Church's antiphon, "*Vidi Aquam.*" The ceremony of sprinkling the congregation grew out of an old custom of blessing water for the faithful on Sunday mornings. In a ninth-century document we read: "Every Sunday, before the celebration of Mass, the priest shall bless water in his church and, for this holy purpose he shall use a clean and suitable vessel. The people, when entering the church, are to be sprinkled with this water, and those who so desire may carry some away."



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