

Little
Meditations
on the
Holy Eucharist

REV. THOMAS DAVID WILLIAMS

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PREFACE

MANY of us are like spoiled children. We have received so much from God that we take His gifts as a matter of course, and fail to appreciate how wonderfully He has favored us. This is true especially in regard to the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

In the Holy Eucharist Jesus Christ, almighty God, is our Guest and Companion. He comes to us to be the food of our souls in Holy Communion; and in the Sacrifice of the Mass He is offered as a Victim just as truly as once He was offered a Victim on the cross. This is a mystery so vast and deep that it requires a strong and unquestioning faith to accept it with all its implications simply on the word of God. "I believe whatever the Son of God has said."

The LITTLE MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST will bring you closer to this miracle of God's power and wisdom and love. It will help you to a better understanding and appreciation of what this mystery is, what are its implications, and their application to yourself. These meditations should be read slowly, attentively, and prayerfully. There is a meditation for each day in the year, but each meditation presents truths so far reaching and important as to furnish sufficient food for thought for a week or more.

A special feature of this book is the frequent use of Holy Scripture. Who can tell us better than God Himself the wonders of the Holy Eucharist? His words are the jewels, the rest is only the setting that encases the treasure.

The LITTLE MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST is dedicated in grateful remembrance to the late Archbishop of Baltimore and Washington, the Most Reverend Michael J. Curley, under whose inspiration, encouragement, and help it was written.

THOMAS DAVIH WILLIAMS

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LITTLE MEDITATIONS
ON THE
HOLY EUCHARIST

PART I

THE REAL PRESENCE

A MYSTERY OF FAITH

THE HOUSE OF GOD

IN OUR nation's Capital there is a house which is seen by many, entered by some, but to which only a few have free access. That house is the residence of the President of the United States.

There is another house which can be found in practically every city of our land, in most of the towns and villages, and by the side of many country roads. No card of admission, no special arrangement is required to enter this house. And yet it is the residence of One greater than any earthly potentate. It is the house of God; for in that house, whether it be a stately cathedral or humble chapel poor as the stable at Bethlehem, dwells the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnate Son of the Eternal Father. He dwells there as truly as we live in our own homes. But He hides the glory of His Divinity, the splendor of His glorified humanity under the lowly appearance of a little white Host, under the appearance of bread. When we come into that house we are as truly in the presence of the body and soul of Jesus Christ, His risen and glorified body united to His Divinity, as we will be in the hour when God brings us face to face with Him in heaven.

“Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?” (2 Par. 6:18.) In the face of this profound mystery, of this fact known to us only by revelation from God, we need a strong, living faith, we need the grace to be willing to believe what the eye cannot see nor hand reach out to touch. Ask God to give you this faith that “we may know the things that are given us from God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

EMMANUEL: GOD WITH US

Our blessed Lord said: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). The Old Law was the shadow, the figure; the New Law is the substance. The Old Law was the preparation for the better things of the New Law. "For the law [i.e., the Old Law] brought nothing to perfection, but a bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God" (Hebr. 7:19).

In the Old Law God promised: "I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you" (Lev. 26:11). This promise He fulfilled when Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem. "It came to pass . . . that a cloud filled the house of the Lord, and the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (3 Kings 8:10, 11).

It is in the New Law that we find the perfect fulfillment of His words: "I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you" (Lev. 26:11). "And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us" (Matt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14). On our altars Jesus, the Son of God, truly dwells; not His glory only but the actual presence of His humanity and Divinity. Our first act on entering the church is an act of faith and adoration. "Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. 45:15). God is in His tabernacle, waiting for His children to come to Him, waiting for us. Do we come to Him?

"Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?" (2 Par. 6:18.) Yes, for He has told us that He is here; and His word is enough. Say then to Him: O God, I believe, I adore, and I love Thee. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). Blessed be Jesus in the most adorable Sacrament of the altar.

THE TEMPLE OF THE NEW LAW

"The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Hab. 2:20). These words apply to every Catholic church where the sanctuary lamp tells us that

He is there. When we enter the church we enter not only into the House of God, we enter into His presence. He is there day and night, always there, waiting for us to come to Him, and so pleased when we do come.

It is hard to grasp the reality of our nearness to Him. We have more reason than had Jacob to say: "Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16). We know it; but our knowledge seems vague and indistinct rather than the clear perception of a truth as real as the fact of our own presence there.

"Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. 45:15). Yes, hidden from sight and touch and hearing, but revealed so clearly by the unfailing light of faith. "Now faith is . . . the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebr. 11:1). "For we walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Is not God's word sufficient? Is not His infallible word a guide more certain and safe than the fallible testimony of our own senses?

"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. 25:8). "I will come into Thy house" (Ps. 5:8). We have better reason to say that than had they of the Old Law. Yes, we will come to Thee, O Lord; and "we shall be filled with the good things of Thy house" (Ps. 64:5). We will come, to tell Thee that we love Thee, and are happy and grateful for the mercy and goodness that keep Thee in the tabernacle, a prisoner of love for us.

WHAT IS THE REAL PRESENCE?

Understand well what is meant by the Real Presence as Jesus told us, as the Church teaches us, and as a faithful Catholic is bound to accept it. When we enter a Catholic church where the Blessed Sacrament is kept we will see a lamp always burning in front of or near the altar. It is there to tell us that He is on that altar in the tabernacle. The first thing that we do is to genuflect, to tell our Lord that we know He is there, that we adore Him for He is God as well as man. Then we speak to Him, and He speaks to our souls.

The real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is no figure of speech or mere symbol; it is not God's presence only in spirit, nor is it merely the presence of His grace. It is the actual presence of the living body of Jesus Christ, the same body that Mary bore in her womb, that lay in a manger, that the shepherds of Bethlehem saw and adored. It is the same body that was nailed to a cross and died on it. It is the same body that arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. It is the same body that was united to the Divinity of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus Christ both as God and as man is truly dwelling in our midst, is truly living in the tabernacle; that is what we mean by the Real Presence.

O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, give to my soul to see by faith what my eyes cannot see. Give me grace to say with adoring love, "My Lord and my God." For, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29).

THE CHALLENGE

"There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not, . . . the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose" (John 1:26, 27). John the Baptist, speaking to the Jews, said this of the blessed Saviour. Do we know who He is? Yes, we know, we believe; but do we realize, do we take in the astounding fact that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is actually here as truly as He was in Palestine in the days of His incarnate life on earth?

It is the absolute reality of His presence that we find so hard to grasp, to visualize. We are so accustomed to be guided by our senses in the perception of things that, when we are called upon to accept a presence that we cannot see or hear or touch, we feel at a loss. We are so bound up in the material things around us, that it requires a determined effort to rise above the evidence of our senses and accept something of which our senses can tell us nothing. The Real Presence is a challenge to our willingness to accept God's word in a matter in which the testimony of our senses does not help us.

Will we accept the challenge? Will we, in complete submission to His word, accept the fact of the Real Presence,

asking not to see, asking only for grace to believe? If we love Him, if we trust Him, we will prove the sincerity, the completeness of our acceptance by the warm, devoted welcome that we give to Him. We will not need to be urged to come to Him; we will come gladly and often. "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23).

THE VEIL

All the knowledge and power of man cannot enable his senses to penetrate the veil in which the Real Presence of Jesus is shrouded on our altars. It is only by faith we can know that He is here. It is not God's will to draw us to Him in His Sacramental Presence by any attraction of the senses, the sight of His beauty, His glory, His majesty. He wishes us to be drawn to Him by faith and love: "Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified" (1 Pet. 1:8). St. Peter here speaks of faith in general; his words certainly apply very clearly to faith in the Real Presence.

It is only natural that we should desire to see one whom we dearly love; and the greater our love the greater is our desire. This desire is good. The prophets in the Old Law and the saints in the New Law possessed it. "My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. 41:3.) "With my spirit within me, in the morning early, I will watch to Thee" (Isa. 26:9).

This desire to see beyond the veil that hides His presence, to hear His voice, to feel His arms about us, this is a part of the intense longing of the soul for the Beatific Vision, for the perfect union with God. This happiness is not for us as yet. We must live and work in faith and hope and love until He calls us to heaven.

For touch and taste and sight the veil can reach.
What lies beyond His word alone can teach.
The glorious Vision He wills not yet to give.
No mortal man may see his God, and live.

AS GOD JESUS IS EVERYWHERE

Jesus Christ is almighty God. He is the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost, possessing with Them the same one, undivided, indivisible divine nature. There is but one God, but one divine nature. There can be only one infinite Being, only one infinite nature. Were there more than one, none would be infinite, for each would be limited by the other.

“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord” (Jer. 23:24). God is everywhere. Being infinite, He fills all place and space. He is present in every part of creation. His presence fills the countless hosts of the heavenly bodies, the entire world in which we live, and the tiniest pebble, the least grain of sand. “Dost thou not think that God is higher than heaven, and is elevated above the height of the stars?” (Job 22:12.) He is present in our houses, in our rooms. No matter where we go, or where we are, He is there. “Am I, think ye, a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?” (Jer. 23:23.)

He Whom we adore in the narrow room of the tabernacle is He Who fills all creation by His presence. Jesus in His divine nature made all things and is present in all things. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was made nothing that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 3, 14).

Jesus, Thou art He Whom “heaven and the heavens of heavens cannot contain” (3 Kings 8:27). Yet Thou dost humble Thyself to dwell amongst us under the appearance of a little white Host. Gladly, gratefully, will we come often to keep Thee company Who came to keep us company.

AS MAN JESUS IS NOT EVERYWHERE

“Who, being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man” (Phil. 2:6, 7). Great beyond our comprehension is the sacrifice, the humiliation

of the Incarnation. In accepting human nature Jesus bound Himself to the limitations human nature imposes. Though as God He is everywhere, as man He is not. His human body and soul, glorified from the time of the Resurrection, is now only in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament.

As God Jesus is wherever we go, wherever we are. But His human body is not everywhere; it is not in our houses, in our rooms, in our work places or offices. When we travel from place to place His bodily presence is not with us unless we are carrying the Blessed Sacrament. In His bodily form Jesus has limited His presence on earth to the confines of that which once was bread but of which He said: "This is My body," and of that which once was wine but of which He said: "This is My blood."

Speaking of the Eucharistic Presence, the Council of Trent says: "It is not a contradiction to say that our Saviour should forever sit in heaven at the right hand of His Father, according to the natural mode of His existence; and that, nevertheless, His substance should be present sacramentally with us in many other places; which though we can scarcely express it in words, we can see with minds illumined by faith to be possible to God."

If Jesus thought enough of us to make His abode in our midst, ought we not think enough of Him to come to Him? Heaven is far away but His earthly home is near.

A MYSTERY OF FAITH

The world is full of mysteries, they confront us at every turn; the mystery of a blade of grass, of the unfolding petals of a rose, of the form, color, and texture found in the smallest flower. And greatest of all natural mysteries is the mystery of life in its many forms throughout the earth, culminating in the supreme earthly mystery, man.

If this world is so full of mysteries it would be strange indeed if the supernatural world and life had not its own mysteries. As a matter of fact the supernatural sphere of being and life, so different from, so far above the material, teems with mysteries, all demanding the assent of our minds, the will to believe; and they all come from the greatest mystery

of all, God, the Creator of all things, the Source of all truth.

Among these mysteries is that of the Real Presence, demanding our full and unquestioning faith. Jesus has told us that He is here. Had He not told us, we could not have known; for He has so completely concealed His presence that mere human power is wholly at a loss to detect it. Truly is this a mystery of faith. We accept it as such and ask not to see, content with the word of God, a proof more certain, more convincing than any physical evidence could be.

Offer Him our faith; tell Him how grateful we are to be allowed to believe, to be of those who “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Thank Him for the gift of this mystery of faith. Kneeling before Him “Whom, having not seen, you love, in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe” (1 Pet. 1:8), tell Him with all our hearts: “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Matt. 17:4).

SUBSTANCE AND APPEARANCE

“How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom” (Ps. 103:24). We are blind if we do not see this truth confronting us at every step. The mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is a striking example of this truth.

Two things are found in all material creation, substance and qualities; and these two always go together. Substance is the thing itself; appearances or qualities are the clothing by means of which the presence of the substance, of the thing itself, can be ascertained. We easily understand that there is a difference between a tree and its qualities, that is, the color, size, and shape of the tree. These qualities belong to the tree and are always with it, but they are not the tree itself. The senses can never directly reach the substance, the thing itself; they can reach only the qualities, which serve as intermediaries, or means of contact, between the senses and the substance.

Now see how this applies to the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. It will help us to understand why we cannot see His real body in the Blessed Sacrament, although it is truly present. Before us we seem to see bread. It was

bread once. It is not bread now, but is the real, living body of Christ; "This is My body." What we really see with our eyes are the qualities or appearances that belonged to bread, and which, by a miraculous suspension of the usual order of nature, remain without their proper substance, the bread which is no longer there.

"This is the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Ps. 117:23). "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23).

THE MIRACLE OF THE EUCHARIST

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; shall any thing be hard for Me?" (Jer. 32:27.) Can anyone who believes in God question His power to do whatever He sees fit to do? Jesus Christ is almighty God. It was easy for Him to change water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. It is easy for Him to change bread and wine into His own body and blood.

How is Jesus truly present in the Holy Eucharist? How is it that when we look upon the Sacred Host we are looking upon our God, but our eyes see only the appearance of bread? When Jesus changed bread and wine into His living body and blood He destroyed the substance of bread and wine, that is, the bread and wine itself, and in their stead there is now the actual substance of His own body and blood. But He retained the appearances of what had been bread and wine, and hid from our senses the appearances of His own body and blood. This is the miracle of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus did this at the Last Supper when He said of the bread and wine: "This is My body; this is My blood." Because He said that they are His body and blood, they are. God has spoken. Who would dare question His truth or His power?

The gift of the Holy Eucharist is for all time. "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52). Therefore Jesus gave to His Apostles and, through them, to the bishops and priests of the Church the power of doing what He did at the Last Supper: the power of changing bread and wine into His body and blood. "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Jesus, help me to thank Thee more and better for the miracle of the Holy Eucharist.

GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8, 9). In this mystery of faith, the Real Presence, God’s wisdom has devised a wondrous way of truly abiding with us in His human nature as well as in His divine nature; a way in which we can receive Him in Holy Communion, and in which we can offer Him as a Sacrifice to His divine Father in holy Mass. Who but God could think of and put into effect so marvelous a thing as this?

When Jesus promised that He would give us His body and blood to be our food and drink, His words met with murmuring and unbelief: “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? . . . Many therefore of His disciples, hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?” (John 6:53, 61.)

They could have known and should have believed that Jesus would fulfill His word in a manner far different from the gross, repugnant way they had pictured. If they had waited in faith and patience, they would have seen the wonderful way in which He gave us His flesh and blood under the appearance of bread and wine, a way in which there was nothing repellent or hard to accept. Only the outward appearance of bread and wine could be touched; His body and blood remained intact, inviolate. He had told them: “If then you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before” (John 6:63). But they would not wait, and: “After this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him” (John 6:67). God’s ways are not our ways. His ways are always best.

GOD PROTECTS HIMSELF

In our blessed Lord’s passion and death He saw fit to permit the awful suffering inflicted on Him by His enemies.

A MYSTERY OF FAITH

This was shown clearly when the Jews came to arrest Him in Gethsemani. "As soon, therefore, as He had said to them: I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). Nor could they touch Him until He gave permission. Later He said to Pilate: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above" (John 18:ii). Only when He willed to die could they kill Him.

Jesus is always God, and God can protect Himself. In His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus so thoroughly protects His sacred body and blood that no sacrilegious hand can touch them, no malice of man can hurt them. No wisdom of man or devil can devise any means by which the body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist can be mutilated, wounded, hurt, or destroyed. Man may break, crush, tread under foot, even destroy the appearance of what was bread before it was changed into the body of the Lord; but he can never reach the substance of the living body of Christ. Fire may burn and water dissolve the appearances; but as soon as they are destroyed Jesus withdraws His sacred Presence.

We naturally recoil in horror when we hear of some terrible profanation of the Blessed Sacrament at the hands of impious men. But be not afraid; God can protect Himself, and He does. They have wantonly, grievously offended God in the very expression of His greatest love. If they could they would go further and destroy His very body in its substantial, real Presence. But this they can never do.

Pray for them; it is not too late. Pray that our ardent love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament may console Him for their hatred and malice.

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO

The blessed Saviour was speaking in the synagogue of Capharnaum in Galilee. Many of those present had witnessed the miracle of the day before when He fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fishes, and all had sufficient. He told His listeners: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51, 52).

Instead of eagerly accepting His word, willing to wait for the fulfillment of His promise, though they did not understand how it would be fulfilled, many failed to believe; their faith was too weak. Forgetting what they had seen the day before, they cried out: "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Worse than this, many of His disciples said: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" And they "walked no more with Him" (John 6:53, 61, 67).

"Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68, 69). To whom shall we go if we leave Christ? Whom can we believe if we do not believe Him? Who can tell us the truth, who can guide and guard and save us but He? If His word be not true there is no truth. "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

How blessed and privileged we are to be allowed to come to Him in His earthly home, the tabernacle, to keep Him company in His lonely vigils of the day and the night! "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son hath not life" (1 John 5:12). Let us come to Him, in order that we may have life forever.

I DO BELIEVE

"Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability. . . . For many things are shewn to thee above the understanding of men" (Eccclus. 3:22, 25). God has made known to us all that is necessary for us to know of His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Remember that this is a mystery, transcending our natural power of understanding. The manner in which He effects the change of bread and wine into His body and blood, the precise and intimate nature of His presence on our altars and many other questions referring to His presence, all these we need not search into too curiously. It is enough to believe and to know on His word that His living, glorified body and soul, His humanity and divinity are truly, actually present on the altar.

God loves simplicity in faith and love and service. He

has clearly revealed to us the doctrine of His Real Presence. In making known to us this doctrine He used plain, unmistakable expressions, both when He promised the Blessed Sacrament and when He fulfilled the promise. "The bread that I shall give is My flesh." "This is My body; this is My blood."

The faith that He asks of us is a simple, frank submission of our minds and wills to His word. "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). He does not demand that we try to penetrate the depths of this mystery. "Faith is . . . the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebr. 11:1). A little child of seven preparing for first Communion knows by faith what no worldly wisdom can teach, that the little white Host is Jesus. The child knows it because He said so; the child believes Him. This is the simple faith that God wishes of us. Will I give it to Him?

COME, LET US ADORE HIM

"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. 25:8). Great was the reverence of the Jews in the Old Law for the Ark of the Covenant that contained the tablets of the ten commandments, and for the Holy of Holies of the Temple in which the Ark was kept. Greater yet must be the reverence that we have for the tabernacle in which dwells the very God Who gave the commandments.

Majestic cathedrals and beautiful churches are an expression of the faith and love and desire with which devoted Catholics welcome their Eucharistic God. The humblest, poorest chapel is kept spotlessly clean; the sanctuary, the altar, the tabernacle are adorned with all that the poor can give, that the Babe of Bethlehem may have their best, and feel at home. Jesus comes to us, lives with us not for our gifts but for ourselves, not so much to receive as to give. Yet there is a gift that He does **wish**, and without it all other gifts are valueless. "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23:26). In that gift all else is contained.

"Adore ye the Lord in His holy court. Let all the earth be moved at His presence" (Ps. 95:9). When we come

before Him our souls should be moved to strong faith, fervent adoration, deep, grateful love, devout prayer. We should make our genuflections a real act of faith, not a thoughtless, empty gesture. We should talk to Him, listen to Him, pour out our hearts before Him. The moments we spend before Him are precious, freighted with many and great graces. Make good use of them. Then, when we go back to our work or to our homes, we will be the happier, richer, better because of the few moments we spent so close to our divine Friend in the tabernacle.

THE CITY OF REFUGE

“Determine what cities shall be for the refuge of fugitives who have shed blood against their will. And when the fugitive shall be in them, the kinsman of him that is slain may not have power to kill him, until he stand before the multitude and his cause be judged” (Num. 35:11, 12). As long as the fugitive remained in the city of refuge he was safe from those seeking his death. This was one of the commands that God gave to His people in the Old Law.

In the New Law God has given us a city of refuge, a haven of safety, a place where the enemy of our souls cannot follow. To this place all may come, provided they come in humility and confidence, even the sinner seeking to be free from his sin. The city of refuge of the New Law is God’s Church, where He waits for us to answer His call, “Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you” (Matt. 11:28).

From the tabernacle He sees so many pursuing their way with no thought or care of Him Who dwells in their midst to save them, if only they will come to Him. But they heed not His plaint, “And you will not come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:40). Still He remains, still He calls to them; for: “The Lord . . . dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Thank God for this city of refuge. “And when thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God thou shalt find Him; yet so if thou seek Him with all thy heart” (Deut. 4:29). And we

will acknowledge with grateful joy: "Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly" (Ps. 45:2).

THE INVITATION

Our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament must be a practical faith; it must be a strong, impelling influence drawing us to Him. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. (Now this He said, signifying what death He should die.)" (John 12:32, 33.) This is true of Himself also in the tabernacle, whence He draws unnumbered souls to Himself.

It is not His wish to be left in a solitary state, with only the flickering light of the sanctuary lamp to keep Him company. He stays in our churches to keep court; but where are His courtiers? He remains here that we might come to Him whenever we will, as often as we will, and may bring to Him our sorrows, our needs, our troubles, aye even our sins to have them washed away by His blood and our tears of contrition. But do we come to Him? In our cares and distractions of the day do we think of our Eucharistic Friend waiting for us, and so often waiting in vain? "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28).

"Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits" (Ecclus. 24:26). "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger" (John 6:35). He is the only one that can satisfy the hunger of our souls. In the depths of our hearts we know that the world cannot fill or satisfy our souls, that were made for God, for heaven, for eternity, for things the world cannot give. He is here to give us these better things, to give us Himself.

Come to Him, then; come often to Him. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 121:1).

THE INVITATION HEADED

"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving" (Ps. 94:2). "Come in before His presence with exceeding great joy" (Ps. 99:2). Do we measure the expression of our

faith in the Real Presence of Jesus on the altar by what we must do, or rather by what we can do? Do we measure our response to His generosity in giving us so precious a gift by using it sparingly, or by using it as He wishes us to use it, often and well? Do we come to Him whenever we can, or only when the laws of the Church demand our presence under penalty of mortal sin?

These are strange questions to ask, of one who believes in the Real Presence. God grant that we can answer them now as we would wish to answer them in the hour of our judgment. That we may do so, let us try to realize the privilege and the happiness of frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. To come to God, to be in His presence, to be so close to Him in no mere figures of speech but in reality! Try to think what that means. We cannot see Him nor hear His voice, but He is here and is speaking to our souls. This is heaven on earth, though the glory and the beauty of His presence are veiled.

Perfect happiness is had only in heaven: but on the altar is the Real Presence of the God of heaven. And from that Fountain of grace flow streams of happiness, of which the world knows nothing. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isa. 12:3). "At Thy right hand are delights even to the end" (Ps. 15:11).

By God's loving grace we will heed His invitation: "Incline your ear and come to Me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. 55:3). And we will tell Him, "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. 17:4).

INCREASE OUR FAITH

Faith, like every other grace of God, is given to be used. If we do as the unprofitable servant did, who buried the talent that his master loaned to him; if we allow our faith in the Real Presence to become dim and dormant from disuse, it will weaken, it may die. Faith must not be stationary, inactive; it must increase or it will diminish. We must never relax in our efforts by prayer and work to increase our faith.

St. Paul said: "God is able to make all grace abound in

you; that ye always . . . may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). We have the grace of faith; we must use it well and often, and our faith will increase and bear rich and abundant fruit. God will not fail in His, if we do our part well.

"Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). This was the prayer of the Apostles to the blessed Saviour; it should be also the prayer of every fervent Catholic. Pray that God may increase our faith in the Real Presence, that He will make our faith strong and practical. We need such a faith in the face of so great a mystery. Ask for a humble, simple faith, that seeks not to understand, that is content with His word, His assurance: "This is My body." When we come into His sacramental presence, let this be our prayer:

Devoutly I adore Thee, hidden God.
I ask not yet to see Thy gracious Self.
Both mind and heart before Thy feet I lay;
For mind and heart are lost in love of Thee.

Give Him our minds and hearts by faith and love. Live in that faith and love, waiting for the happy day we will see Him in His glory, when our love will be made perfect in possession.

SHARE OUR FAITH

"The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:10, 11). This is true now as it was in the days when the Jews refused to accept their Lord and Saviour. How many there are now who do not believe in the Real Presence, who never come to their Eucharistic God, who give Him no part in their mind and heart and life!

We who have received the faith to know that He is here, the grace to love Him and to come to Him ought to share our grace and happiness with others. Remember, "No blessing is imparted for ourselves alone, no gift is given except to share." Our Lord said to His Apostles: "Freely have you received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

God has been generous to us; have we been generous to

others? What have we done to make His presence known to others? Have we made any effort to awaken in them, by God's grace, the desire to come to Him, to adore Him and to share in the happiness that is ours? Do not ask as Cain did: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9.) Our Lord said: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required" (Luke 12:48). We owe to others the debt of charity, the charity of sharing with them, as much as God permits, the grace of faith in the Real Presence.

In what better way can we show the strength and depth of our faith in the Real Presence, our grateful appreciation of the gift that has brought so much peace and happiness into our lives, than by bringing others to the foot of the throne of our and their Eucharistic God? This we can do by the silent but powerful sermon of our example, by our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

OUR DUTY OF REPARATION

"I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (Ps. 68:21). This is the plaint of the blessed Saviour in His passion as prophesied by the Psalmist. In His Eucharistic life has He not cause to complain of the many who know that He is here yet seldom or never come to Him? "And you will not come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:40).

How strange it seems that God's most precious gift to man, the gift of Himself, finds no acceptance and appreciation from so great a number of people! Even as in the days of the Incarnation so now it is true in part, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Many do not believe that He is as truly here as He was in the manger at Bethlehem or in the house at Nazareth. And some who know that He is here give Him little thought or care.

Thank God, there are a number who do think and care, who do come to Him often, drawn by a strong, loving faith, who ask not "Must I come?" but, "May I come?" Theirs is the happy privilege to comfort their blessed Saviour, to cause Him to look upon their faith rather than the unbelief or

cold indifference of others. Am I one of these favored souls, sentinels of the Blessed Sacrament, friends of God, companions of the Eucharistic Christ?

Great is the privilege that is ours, to make reparation to our Eucharistic Saviour for the hurt that He receives from the neglect and indifference of so many who scarcely give Him even a thought. Blessed are we who, taking to heart His sad plaint, "They will not come to Me," hasten to His side, bringing the gift of our love.

HOW SHALL I THANK THEE?

"Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. 13:16, 17).

Before the profound mystery of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we bow our minds and wills in full and glad subjection. But our faith goes further than this. Not only do we believe fully and firmly, but we are happy and grateful to be allowed to believe. We thank God that He has given us to know the wonderful truth of the Real Presence, that He has given us the privilege to come before Him, to look upon the Sacred Host, knowing that we are looking upon our God, though the veil screens Him from our sight. "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."

"He hath not done in like manner to every nation; and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them" (Ps. 147:20). What have we done to be so favored by God? What have we done to draw down upon ourselves so great a blessing, so precious a gift, the fulfillment in a more perfect way of the promise: "I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you. . . . I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev. 26:11, 12)? "For behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (Zach. 2:10).

How shall I thank Thee, my Eucharistic Lord and Saviour, for Thy greatest gift to man, the gift of Thy own dear Self?

“We, Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture, will give thanks to Thee for ever” (Ps. 78:13).

A PRAYER TO THE SACRED HOST

Dear God, what shall I say when I look upon the Sacred Host, Thy own dear Self? All seems to be contained in this: I adore Thee, I love Thee, I thank Thee. This indeed is only a feeble echo of the chorus of praise and glory, of adoration and love sung by the celestial spirits that surround Thy earthly abode.

Most Sacred Host, I adore Thee. “Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour” (Isa. 45:15). With all my soul I adore Thee, I praise Thee and glorify Thee. “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready” (Ps. 107:2). “Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee; Thou art my God, and I will exalt Thee” (Ps. 117:28). Devoutly I adore Thee, O hidden God. Mind and heart bow low before Thee; for mind and heart are lost in Thee.

Most Sacred Host, I love Thee. Who would not love One Who so loves us? Dear Lord, Thou didst say: “I will draw them . . . with the bands of love” (Osee 11:4). As from the cross so also from the tabernacle Thou hast drawn my whole soul to Thee by Thy love. I give Thee all the love of my heart. I am Thine; let me be always Thine; be Thou always the supreme love of my heart.

Most Sacred Host, I thank Thee. “O how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O God!” (Ps. 35:8.) “Now therefore, our God, we give thanks to Thee, and we praise Thy glorious name” (1 Par. 29:13). Dear God, I can find no words of mine to tell what my heart would say. But Thou knowest that with all my soul I adore Thee, I love Thee in Thy Real Presence on this altar; and again and again my heart cries out to Thee: “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

A MYSTERY OF LOVE

THE GREATEST MYSTERY

DEEPER, far deeper yet is the mystery of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. After all, it is not hard to believe that the blessed Saviour can do this wondrous thing, can change bread and wine into His living body and blood, can dwell in the tabernacle, truly, really, substantially present under the appearance of a little white Host. His wisdom and omnipotence are so clearly revealed in the works of creation that we easily acknowledge, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee" (Job 42:2). "Great is our Lord, and great is His power, and of His wisdom there is no number" (Ps. 146:5).

But that He should love us so much, that He should go so far to prove His love for us who have done so little to deserve it, this indeed staggers our minds, this indeed is the greatest mystery of the Real Presence. "What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job 7:17.) "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:5.) We have more reason than had Jacob of old to say: "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies, and of Thy truth which Thou hast fulfilled to Thy servant" (Gen. 32:10). For we have received the greatest of all His mercies, the best of all His gifts — Himself.

"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. 31:3). Yes, He came from heaven to dwell with us in the Blessed Sacrament, taking pity on us, sharing our exile. Thus does He draw us to Him now, preparing us for the happy day when, the veil removed, we shall see Him face to face, and live with Him forever.

JESUS WISHES TO BE WITH US

The Holy Eucharist was instituted by our blessed Lord to be a Sacrament and a Sacrifice. He gave us His body and blood to be received as food and drink: "For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:56). This is the Sacrament. He gave us His body and blood also to be offered to God as a continuation, in an unbloody manner, of the offering of Himself to His Father that He made on the cross. This is the Sacrifice of the Mass, the greatest gift a man can give to God, the gift of God's own Son: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19). This is the Sacrifice of the New Law prophesied by Malachias: "In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Mal. 1:11).

Surely in the fulfillment of these two purposes for which Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist it would seem that He had done enough for us, had given sufficient proof of a boundless love. But He wished to do more: He wished to be with us not only during Communion and in the Mass but to remain always, day and night, in the tabernacle: "My delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8:31).

"And I will rejoice over them, when I shall do them good" (Jer. 32:41). Why does Jesus wish so much to be with us? What can we give Him; what comfort does our presence bring to Him? We are so weak and little, and we come to Him with hands almost empty. He does not need us, but we need Him; and so He wishes to be with us. He made us for Himself, and we can be happy only in Him and with Him.

Heaven seems so far away; but the God of heaven is near, on the very altar before us.

THE CHARITY OF CHRIST

St. Paul prays for the Christians at Ephesus that, "You may be able . . . to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:18, 19). Our blessed Lord Himself said: "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have

loved you" (John 15:9). This He meant not only for His Apostles but for us.

"God is charity" (1 John 4:16). But God is infinite; and His love for us is the fathomless, shoreless ocean of a love that, overflowing from its infinite Source, fills all creation, fills the whole being of man, the masterpiece of earthly creation. "For Thou lovest all things that are. . . . But Thou sparest all, because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls" (Wisdom 11:25, 27).

Even more true of us than of the Jews of old are the words of God: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye" (Zach. 2:8). Has He not given sufficient evidence of His infinite love for us? "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him" (1 John 4:9). "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16).

"Behold how He loved him" (John 11:36). The Jews, seeing Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, spoke these words; they are just as true of Jesus' love for us. And this is the divine, infinite love that brought Jesus upon our altars and keeps Him there. "The charity of Christ holdeth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). Yes, it impels us to come to Him, to lay our burdens at His feet, to listen to His words of comfort and of hope, to pour out our whole hearts in loving, earnest prayer to the divine Prisoner of love before us.

SO NEAR MAY WE COME TO HIM

God is everywhere. Because He is infinite His divine presence permeates and fills all space and place. He is in the church we enter, He is on the street outside, He is in the city and country, He is on earth, sea, and in the sky. So vast a truth is this that our minds fail to grasp fully its immensity.

Jesus Christ is God, therefore He is everywhere. When He

became man He assumed a finite nature, still being the infinite God. "Who, being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:6, 7). After the Ascension the glorified body of Christ is actually and substantially present only in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament. See how close this brings Jesus to us; so close that on entering the church we are, as it were, face to face before the living body of the incarnate God, with only the sacramental veil between us.

The blessed Mother and St. Joseph were very close to Jesus for many years. For three years the Apostles walked with Him, conversed with Him, lived with Him. But all this while they saw only His humanity. On the altar both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus are hidden from us. Yet we are as near to Him as were these favored ones of old, for we are so close to the Sacred Host, and the Sacred Host is Jesus Himself, God and man. "Indeed the Lord is in this place" (Gen. 28:16).

Think of this when we come to Him, and we will understand better the divine condescension, the infinite love, the boundless mercy of the blessed Lord, Who said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). "Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?" (2 Par. 6:18.) So near may we come to Him.

HE IS GOD

If we wish to learn well the lesson of Jesus' love for us in the Blessed Sacrament, to be penetrated through and through with a fuller consciousness of the love that passes all understanding, we must keep steadfastly before us the truth that He Who dwells on the altar before us is God. Yes, He is almighty God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the same divine Being Who made all things and by Whom all things are kept in existence.

This is He of Whom Isaias said in prophecy: "For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us . . . and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). This is He of Whom St. John wrote: "In the beginning was

the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). This is He of Whom St. Paul said: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6).

When we look upon the Sacred Host or upon the tabernacle, we should say to Him Who is truly present there: "My Lord and my God." Think of Jesus' words to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). Blessed am I; for, if I believe that He is my God, I have looked into the loving Heart of Jesus, I am learning the lesson of His love for me in the Real Presence, I am beginning to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of love that brings the blessed Saviour on our altars and keeps Him there — God with us.

HE IS OUR CREATOR

"Come let us adore . . . before the Lord That made us" (Ps. 94:6). Truly the Real Presence is a mystery of love, a mystery so profound, so vast that in its contemplation the mind is like to a little boat afloat on a shoreless sea. To take in the truth that the God of all power and wisdom, of all greatness and immensity so loves us as to come down to our poor level of earth and dwell amongst us, requires all the power of faith to help our weak little minds. Therefore must we strive, by God's grace, to keep before us Who He is Who loves us so much and Whom we adore and love in the Sacred Host upon our altars.

"Thou art our Maker, and we all are the works of Thy hands" (Isa. 64:8). O Sacred Host, Thou art my God, my Creator; to Thee I owe my being, all that I am and have. Thou art He Who said: "I made the earth, and I created man upon it" (Isa. 45:12). Yes, "Thy hands have made me and formed me" (Ps. 118:73). Thou, the God of all power, of all creation, art truly present here on this altar. Thou, Who boldest in Thy hands the vast universe, hast come to us, dost stay with us in the Sacrament of Thine infinite love.

Most Sacred Host, I adore Thee, my God and my Creator. I thank Thee for the divine, boundless love that brings Thee upon this altar. I love Thee with all my heart, though my poor love is but a pitiful little return for so great a love as Thine. "Blessing the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can, for He is above all praise. When you exalt Him put forth all your strength and be not weary, for you can never go far enough" (Ecclus. 43:33, 34).

HE IS OUR MASTER

"Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father so also the soul of the son is Mine" (Ezech. 18:4). When we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, whether It be in the tabernacle, or enthroned in solemn Exposition on the altar, or during Holy Communion, we should bear in mind that we are kneeling before our Master and Lord, Who owns us as no earthly master could own a slave. His dominion over us is absolute. He made us, and we are His property. He can do with us what He wishes. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it: Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20.)

Look long and earnestly at the tabernacle. Try to take in this stupendous truth, that He Who dwells therein is indeed He Who once said: "Cannot I do with you as this potter, O house of Israel? . . . Behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter so are you in My hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:6). The life that He gave to us we hold at this very moment only by His sufferance. "And how could any thing endure if Thou wouldst not, or be preserved if not called by Thee?" (Wisd. 11:26.)

Think not that His power is shortened, that His dominion over us is lessened one iota because He does not manifest His power and majesty, as He did to the Jews amidst the thunder and lightning of Sinai's clouded summit. "But Thou, being Master of power, judgest with tranquillity, and with great favour disposest of us; for Thy power is at hand when Thou wilt" (Wisd. 12:18).

The Sacred Host is He Who said; "Thou art Mine" (Isa,

43:1). But He wishes us to be His by love rather than by constraint. And so He stays with us to gain our hearts. Has He gained mine?

HE IS OUR KING

“There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful King . . . Who sitteth upon His throne, and is the God of dominion” (Ecclus. 1:8). This is He in Whose presence we come when we enter the church. This is He Who dwells in the tabernacle, abiding with us under the humble appearance of a little white Host. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is King of all the earth, of all creation, for He made all things, and they are His. “For God is the King of all the earth” (Ps. 46:8).

He is our King, and we are His subjects. To Him we owe homage, loyalty, reverence, and obedience. But He wishes more than this from us: He wishes our love, the willing surrender of our hearts and souls to Him. The kings of old were wont to compel the obedience of their subjects. The obedience that our King wishes of us is not that given only through fear and constraint, it is the obedience of love.

See what He has done to gain the service of our love. The kings of old were not accustomed to mingle with their subjects, to live in their midst in close contact with them, to be at their call. Our King dwells amongst us, sharing our poverty as well as our riches, dwelling not only in stately cathedrals and beautiful churches but in the poorest, humblest hut of a chapel in the wilds. He is there that all may come to Him whenever they wish: for “My delights were to be with the children of men” (Prov. 8:31).

Such is the love for us of our King in the Blessed Sacrament. From the depths of our hearts, as we kneel before Him, let this be our prayer: “Now, to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).

HE IS OUR SAVIOUR

When we look at the Sacred Host do we realize that we are looking upon the Babe of Bethlehem, the Child of

Nazareth, the Teacher of Israel, the Victim of Calvary? Yes, this is the Son of God, God Himself, Who "Emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). This is He "Who His own Self bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice; by Whose stripes you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

The Sacred Host upon which we look with adoring love is the divine Saviour, Who owns us by the double title of Creator and Redeemer: "You are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 7:23). And the price paid for our souls was nothing less than the life of Christ, "Who died for us, that . . . we may live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:10). "But you are . . . a purchased people; . . . Who in time passed were not a people, but are now the people of God" (1 Pet. 2:9, 10).

We must try to realize this truth, to bring it home to ourselves, that before us is He Whose love for us brought Him from heaven to a stable and to a cross, and now brings Him to this little home of a tabernacle. And this to gain the love of our poor hearts. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. 31:3).

With firm, unquestioning faith say with John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Then with fervent, grateful love say to Jesus in the tabernacle: "Who am I, O Lord . . . that Thou shouldst give such things to me?" (1 Par. 17:16.)

HE IS OUR FRIEND

Most of us know something of the value of a true friend. The Scriptures tell us: "A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity... . Blessed is he that findeth a true friend" (Ecclus. 6:14, 15; 25:12).

Blessed are we, for we have found a friend better than

all the friends on earth. We have a friend whose love for us, all unworthy of it though we be, transcends all human love, whose love is kind, patient, forbearing, never failing, infinite, divine. It is the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for us whom He deigns to call His friends: "You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you" (John 15:14).

To be the friends of God! What an honor, what a dignity and privilege beyond all our deserts! The great God of all creation stoops down to the low level of our poor humanity, of our weaknesses and imperfections, of our utter unworthiness; and raises us to the sublime heights of friends of God. How could He do it, He Who knows the clay of which we are made, Who knows us as we really are, having of ourselves nothing to commend us to Him?

"Such is my Beloved, and He is my Friend" (Cant. 5:16). It is because He is our Friend that He is here in the Blessed Sacrament day and night. Come to Him; He is waiting for us, expecting us. Do not disappoint Him, as so many others do. With all our hearts thank Him for giving us so great, so loving and faithful a Friend. "I found Him Whom my soul loveth; I held Him and I will not let Him go" (Cant. 3:4).

HE IS THE PHYSICIAN OF OUR SOULS

"For I am the Lord, thy Healer" (Exod. 15:26). Looking down from heaven God saw the sad state of man, stricken by the malady of sin, sick unto death, helpless and hopeless. "All iniquity is like a two-edged sword, there is no remedy for the wound thereof" (Ecclus. 21:4). "What fruit therefore had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death" (Rom. 6:21).

The mercies of the Lord are infinite; and the more we need His mercy the more strongly His mercy is drawn to us. "Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me" (Osee 13:9). And so, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "And He coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14). He healed not only the ills of the

body but the more grievous disease of the soul, sin: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2). He suffered and died to free us from sin, taking our sins upon Himself; "by Whose stripes you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

In the Blessed Sacrament the divine Physician sees so many souls in the world sick unto death. He sees others weakened by the accumulation of many venial sins, falling into spiritual slothfulness, neither cold nor hot, yielding easily to temptation, in grave danger of falling into mortal sin. He has pity on them, for He loves them as only God can love. And so from the tabernacle He calls them to come and be cured, to seek and obtain from Him the restoration of spiritual life, strength, and energy.

"And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him, and healed all" (Luke 6:19). If we go to Him in faith and trust and true contrition, the divine Physician will cure us, no matter how great the malady.

HE IS OUR LIFE

We are earnestly trying, by God's grace, to gain a better understanding and realization of the infinite love for us of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to come closer to this mystery of love. And to do this we must keep in mind Who He is Whom we adore and love in this mystery of love. This is why we meditate upon the many different ways in which His love manifests itself in the Real Presence: its many aspects, like the facets of a diamond, radiating the brilliance of a love of which God alone is capable.

"He is thy life and the length of thy days" (Deut. 30:20). We come from God, we live by Him and for Him, and we return to Him: "In Him we live and move and are" (Acts 17:28). So intimately is our life bound up in God that "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). This is especially true of our spiritual life, of the life of the soul. "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son, hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

This is He Who dwells in the tabernacle before which

we are kneeling. This is He Who said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This is He from Whom we derive all our spiritual life and strength and power. Our blessed Lord told us: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He was referring to the Incarnation and the Redemption. His words can be applied also to His real presence on our altars, where He dwells that we may come to Him to receive a more abundant measure of the supernatural life of the soul: "For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. 35:10).

HE IS OUR SALVATION

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. 126:1). Our blessed Lord has told us how completely helpless we are of ourselves: "For without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). And St. Paul tells us: "Not that we are sufficient to think, anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

How many, nearing the end of their life, are compelled to acknowledge: "We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing" (Luke 5:5). "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. 75:6). They would not acknowledge, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Ps. 3:9). They would not heed the injunction, "Love God all thy life, and call upon Him for thy salvation" (Ecclus. 13:18). Because they would not seek salvation where alone it could be found, they found it not.

By God's mercy and grace we know where salvation is to be found. It is very near to us; it is in the tabernacle, where the divine Prisoner of love waits for us: "Incline your ear and come to Me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. 55:3). Here is the very Source of salvation; here is our salvation. Saints and sinners may come to Him; and, if they come in faith and trust, in humility and true desire to find salvation, they will find it: "And him that cometh to Me I will not cast out" (John 6:37).

This is why He is here, to draw us to Him by the might of His love, by the power of His grace. The nearer we come to

the Source of salvation the more fully we partake of it. Then let us come to Him often, and "We shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL GRACE

"Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Hebr. 4:16). The throne of grace is in heaven, where God sits in His glory and majesty; but heaven seems far away. The throne of grace is also here on earth, where Jesus, true God and true man, dwells in our very midst, in the tabernacle of our churches.

As the sun sends out its rays, giving light and heat and life, so from the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament come forth the rays of divine grace, bringing light where there was darkness, heat where all was cold, life where before there was death. From the tabernacle come forth, as from an ever flowing fountain, faith, hope, and love, comfort, strength, and peace to those who draw near to this Source of all grace.

"All you that thirst come to the waters; and you that have no money make haste, buy, and eat; come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not satisfy you?" (Isa. 55:1, 2.) So great is Jesus' love for us that He wishes to give us His grace more than we wish to receive it. He offers it to all; to those who need it most, even to those cold, indifferent, worldly souls who give to Him no thought or care.

But how abundantly does He pour forth His grace into the hearts of those who earnestly desire it: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill" (Matt. 5:6). Come often to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Source of all grace; and "you shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isa. 12:3).

HE IS OUR LIGHT

"I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). Kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament we are kneeling before the

Light of the world, before Him Who said: "I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me may not remain in darkness" (John 12:46). This is He of Whom the prophet spoke: "For the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp" (Isa. 62:1).

Yes, He has come, "To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). He has come to us, and He stays with us in the tabernacle that we may be very close to Him, the Source of light, for He knows how much we need the light. We need more faith, stronger, clearer, deeper insight into the things of the spiritual world, a better appreciation of spiritual values, "that we may know the things that are given us from God" (1 Cor. 2:12). We need to know ourselves better, to recognize how far we fall short of what we ought to be and to do.

"In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. 35:10). The nearer we come to the light the more of it we receive and the more it penetrates into every part and fiber of our being. Come close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, that we may share more abundantly in the light that comes from Him: "Come ye to Him, and be enlightened" (Ps. 33:6). Say to Him: "Thou art my lamp, O Lord, and Thou, O Lord, wilt enlighten my darkness" (2 Kings 22:29).

Heed the injunction: "Walk then as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth" (Eph. 5:8, 9); "Let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isa. 2:5).

HE IS OUR STRENGTH

"For what is my strength that I can hold out, or what is my end that I should keep patience? . . . Behold there is no help for me in myself" (Job 6:11, 13). Our own experience tells us how little we can depend on ourselves in the hour of temptation and trial. Where is our power of endurance when prolonged and grievous pain racks our body or sorrow burdens our soul? Where is our strength of mind and will when temptations grievous and persistent assail us, when

we cry out: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.)

"The Lord is my rock, and my strength, and my Saviour" (2 Kings 22:2). Yes, in the tabernacle we shall find Him Who "giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not" (Isa. 40:29). He came to us and stays with us to be "our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly" (Ps. 45:2). He knows how much we need the strength that He alone can give, He knows that "vain is the help of man" (Ps. 107:13). His great love for souls goes out to all, and in an especial manner to the soul troubled and tempted, weak and weary.

"The Lord is good, and giveth strength in the day of trouble, and knoweth them that hope in Him" (Nah. 1:7). Why, then, do we not come to Him in the tabernacle, we who so much need what He so much wishes to give; to receive courage, strength to fight the forces of evil that are stronger than we, to bear the burdens too heavy for our own unaided power?

Come to Him, and we shall acknowledge: "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the whirlwind, a shadow from the heat" (Isa. 25:4).

HE IS OUR COMFORTER

"I, I Myself, will comfort you" (Isa. 51:12). Our blessed Lord speaks these words from the tabernacle where He waits to receive all who come to Him for comfort and help in their needs, for consolation and strength in their sorrows and trials. And they will not come in vain if they come to Him in humility and confidence, believing His word: "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me; He hath sent Me ... to comfort all that mourn, to appoint to the mourners of Sion and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief" (Isa. 61:1-3).

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:5). He that spoke these words is both God and man;

and as man in His life on earth He bore the weight of the bitterest sorrow man can know. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (Isa. 53:3). This is He Who is waiting for us to come to Him in our sorrows and heart-aches, to lay our burdens at His feet. He knows and He cares; this is why He is here. If only we would know and understand the depths of His love, of His compassion, of His desire to comfort and to help us, nothing could keep us away.

Come to the divine Comforter of souls; do not let Him wait for us in vain. There is no one else who can do for us what He can and will do. "As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. 66:13). And we will acknowledge, with a grateful heart: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. 93:19).

HE IS OUR HOPE

"And now, what is my hope? Is it not the Lord? and my substance is with Thee" (Ps. 38:8). O blessed hope, the strength of the weary, the light of the blind, the staff of the lame, giving courage and peace to the soul in fear and disquiet, truly thou art the gift of God. "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord . . . that hath walked in darkness and hath no light? Let him hope in the name of the Lord and lean upon his God" (Isa. 50:10).

Have we not yet learned the lesson which God's word and our own experiences have taught us, that in ourselves and of ourselves we have no hope nor ground for hope, and perforce must turn to God Who is our only hope? Vain is our reliance upon human wisdom or strength, upon the help of man. There is only one who can help us in life and in the hour of death, in time and in eternity. "O grant us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man" (Ps. 107:13).

Come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in humble trust, in firm and loving hope. Say to Him: "I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord. . . . My lots are in Thy hands" (Ps. 30:15-16). Yes, our lots are in the hands of the best, the

truest of all friends. Shall we not, then, put all our hope in Him Who is here to comfort and strengthen, to help and save us? His very presence here tells us that we do well to hope in Him Who loves us so much, and Who will justify our hope, "if we hold fast the confidence and glory of hope unto the end" (Hebr. 3:6). "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded" (Ecclus. 2:11).

HE IS OUR REWARD

He Who dwells in the tabernacle before which we are kneeling is Jesus Christ, true God and true man. The Sacred Host upon Which we look with adoring love is the very God Who is heaven's beatitude, before Whom the celestial choirs chant their hymns of praise and are filled with a glory and a happiness that have no counterpart on earth. This is He Who is our reward in time and eternity. "Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul" (1 Pet. 1:8, 9).

Because we believe without seeing, because we love Him in His abasement in the Holy Eucharist, we will see Him in His glory and beauty in heaven: "His eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Isa. 33:17). "But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). "We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Because we desire to be with Jesus on earth, because we come to Him often in His Sacramental Presence and give Him the consolation and the love of our presence to make up for those who neglect Him, He will bring us very near to Him in heaven. The closer we are to our Lord on earth, the closer we will be to Him in His kingdom above.

The sacramental veil now hides His sacred face, His resplendent glory, the beauty and the brightness that are the very light of heaven. But the day will come when the veil will be removed, and "God will shew His brightness in thee to every one under heaven" (Bar. 5:3).

JESUS' HIDDEN LIFE AND THE REAL PRESENCE

“I WILL SPEAK TO HER HEART” (OSEE 2:14)

WHEN we look upon the Sacred Host, or kneel before the tabernacle in which Jesus is truly present, many thoughts pass through our minds. There is so much to think about Him before Whom we kneel, so much to tell Him, so much to thank Him for, so much to ask of Him, that the time goes all too quickly. Before our wondering, adoring minds pass as a living picture the scenes and events of Jesus' life on earth. It seems as if they are relived as we look upon Him now, in outward appearance so still, so little, so weak and helpless.

Behold the contrast between external appearance and inward reality, between what our eyes see and what faith tells us. The Sacred Host moves only when someone moves It, speaks in no audible tones, gives no external evidence of Its wisdom, power, and splendor. Yet this Sacred Host moves the hearts of man and draws them to Him more strongly than magnet ever drew steel. This Sacred Host speaks to the soul as no one else ever could, melting the ice of indifference, softening the hardness of the hardest heart, kindling the fire of love, zeal, and sacrifice. This Sacred Host gives light, strength, and beauty in ever increasing measure to those responding to Its influence.

Jesus has much to tell us in the happy moments that we spend in His Eucharistic presence. He has many scenes to put before our souls that our eyes and ears cannot see or hear in this world. The Book of Wisdom, speaking of the wisdom that comes from God, tells us: “Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness” (Wisd. 8:16). Experience for ourselves how true this is when God Himself speaks to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

SEND FORTH THY LIGHT

In our meditations upon the Blessed Sacrament we must keep foremost in our minds these two fundamental truths: Jesus Christ is really present, actually and substantially, and Jesus Christ is almighty God. He Who made us and Who redeemed us is here both as God and man. Adore Him with all our souls. Ask not to see, ask only to believe and to love. The Apostles saw only the humanity of Christ; His divinity was hidden from them just as it is from us.

On the cross was veiled Thy Godhead's splendor;
Here the Host Thy manhood also hides.

The Magi were guided by a star to the side of the newborn Christ. So also the light of these two truths, Jesus is here and Jesus is God, will be the guiding star that will lead us to a better knowledge of His infinite love as shown alike in His incarnate and in His eucharistic life.

It is a wonderful journey that we are about to take in this land of mysteries: "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. 13:16, 17).

Enter upon this journey in all humility, and let faith and love be our companions. We are entering into the world of the supernatural. We will see in this parallel between Jesus' mortal life on earth and His life in the Holy Eucharist how wonderfully His love shows itself in many ways so different yet so alike. Let this be our prayer: "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; they have conducted me, and brought me unto Thy holy hill and into Thy tabernacles" (Ps. 42:3).

THE PARALLEL

The Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in some mysterious way, bears a striking resemblance to the life of Jesus on earth, from the first moment of the Incarna-

tion to the awful moment on the cross when, "bowing His head, He gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

The mystery of the Real Presence shows God's love for us just as we see it in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in every incident of His public life, in His bitter passion and death. This is "the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19), which brought Him on earth in the Incarnation, which keeps Him on earth now in the Real Presence and will keep Him with us until the end of the world.

This parallel between the thirty-three years of Jesus' mortal life and His life in the Blessed Sacrament gives us abundant meditation material, and enables us to penetrate still further into the infinite depths of His love. This, then, is what with God's help we shall try now to do. The ground on which we tread is holy. We enter upon it in deepest humility and reverence, with strong faith and burning love.

The lessons we shall learn are precious beyond words to tell. Blessed indeed are we and favored by God, Who says to us what He said to His Apostles: "Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11). Yes, to us is given to see with the eyes of faith, unfolding before us as a living panorama the repetition in the Blessed Sacrament of the mysteries of His life on earth, each mystery a bead in the rosary of God's infinite love for man. Pray for light and grace: "For if it shall please the great Lord He will fill him with the spirit of understanding" (Ecclus. 39:8).

THE FIRST TABERNACLE

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). "Whereas His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:18).

Mary the Virgin Mother was the first tabernacle that held the blessed Saviour and was His first adorer in His incarnate life. There are no words to tell her adoring love, her wondering awe, her humble, grateful happiness whilst she held in

her sacred body the great God of heaven, whilst she clothed Him with her own flesh and bone and sinew.

Looking upon the Sacred Host we look at Him Whom Mary bore. Close as she was to Him in His life on earth, she could not see His divinity. Close as the priest is to the Sacred Host That he holds in his hands, he can see neither the divinity nor the humanity of Christ, nor can we. "Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. 45:15). Yet, as though by a second Incarnation, Jesus comes on the altar as truly as He came to Mary. And His coming on the altar in the Blessed Sacrament is as great a mystery and a miracle as was His coming on earth when Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Mother of God, Tabernacle of the Most High, first adorer of the incarnate God, obtain for us some little of your faith and love, that we may give Him a better, a more fervent welcome when He comes upon our altars and dwells in our midst in the Sacrament of His love.

THE VISITATION

"And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears the infant in my womb leaped for joy" (Luke 1:43, 44). Great was the faith of Elizabeth, for by the light and inspiration of the Holy Ghost she recognized and acknowledged the great mystery of the Incarnation, the presence of the incarnate God hidden in the womb of His virgin mother. The same incarnate God is in the tabernacle before us, but hidden under the appearance of bread. God grant that our faith in His presence be as strong and living as was the faith of Elizabeth.

True faith begets humility. Elizabeth recognized the sublime dignity of Mary. She recognized that great was the honor of receiving under her roof the mother of God, of giving shelter to the very Lord God Himself. "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me, that He Who will be born of her, the incarnate God, should honor my house with His unseen presence?" Do we recognize how

great is the privilege of having the same incarnate God in our midst, of being allowed to come to Him as often as we wish?

The infant in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy at the presence of his yet unborn Saviour. So holy is Jesus' presence that it sanctified Elizabeth's child even before its birth and made that child the greatest of all prophets, John the Baptist. So will the presence of the same blessed Saviour, dwelling on our altars now, sanctify those who come to Him in faith and love and earnest desire. Heed, then, His invitation: "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits" (Ecclus. 24:26).

HE HATH DONE GREAT THINGS TO ME

"And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. . . . Because He That is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name" (Luke 1:46-49). This hymn of grateful praise that rose from Mary's heart in response to the inspired words of Elizabeth showed the profound realization that the blessed Mother had of the privilege and honor that were hers. God gave her His own divine Son, entrusted to her the duty of giving to His Son the human body by which He was to redeem the world.

Of all the gifts that God could give to man, the greatest beyond all compare is the gift of Himself in the Incarnation and in the Blessed Sacrament. Of all the great and good things that He could do for man, the greatest and the best was that which He did when He came on earth, to redeem us by His life, sufferings, and death, and when He instituted the Holy Eucharist, to stay with us until the end of the world.

Should not we too, then, sing our hymns of praise and thanks to God? For we too have good reason to say as Mary said: "He That is mighty hath done great things to me." We know His priceless gift to us, the gift of Himself, to be our Companion on earth, to share our exile with us, and, by sharing it, to brighten and lighten it and make our sojourn here no longer a hard and wearying burden.

Yes, we know all this; but do we thank Him as we should?

Do we come to Him eagerly, gladly, often? Or do we leave Him waiting, patiently waiting, yet waiting still? Will be one of those of whom it was said: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11)?

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14). "For this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David" (Luke 2:11). Almost two thousand years ago a miracle of God's infinite love for man was wrought on earth, a miracle wonderful beyond words to tell, beyond man's power to conceive were it not revealed by God. "The Word was made flesh."

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John 1:1, 3). The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh. God became man. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. 2:6, 7). Truly has He emptied Himself to become the little Babe of Bethlehem, helpless in His mother's arms.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . And the bread that I will give is My flesh" (John 6:51, 52). Not content with shrouding His divinity under the veil of humanity, Jesus now conceals both divinity and humanity under the appearance of bread. Not content with living on earth for thirty-three years, He now lives with us in the Real Presence on our altars, and will until the end of time: "My delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8:31). O wondrous miracle of love that He could love us so much, that He would go so far to show this love!

Think of these things when we kneel before the tabernacle of our changeless Friend. Tire not of telling Him our grateful love: He never tires of hearing it.

THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU

"And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the

Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. . . . And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger” (Luke 2:12, 16). The sign by which the shepherds were to find and recognize the Saviour Christ the Lord was a stable, a manger, and an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. Yet this Infant is He of Whom Isaias said: “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace” (9:6).

Only a few miles away, in the great city of Jerusalem were the palace of King Herod and the stately homes of the rich. But these were not the sign that God chose to lead to the newborn Saviour. And the sign was not given to the rich and proud, but to the poor and humble: “I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones” (Matt. 11:25).

If we seek Jesus now we will find Him clothed not in royal raiment, not even in the appearance of a poor and helpless infant. We will find Him to all outward appearance devoid of beauty, power, motion, even life; we will find Him unde: the lowly appearance of bread. Yet He is true God and true man; He is the Babe of Bethlehem, He is the God of all power and life.

Have we the faith of the shepherds? They adored the Child in the manger as their Saviour and God. Do we recognize and adore as our God and Saviour the little white Host in the tabernacle? Do we accept the sign? Do we thank God that He gave it to us?

THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR HIM

“And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). When almighty God, in the fullness of time, sent His divine Son into the world, there was no room for Him, no shelter but a bleak and bare stable. “The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:10, 11).

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein” (Ps. 23:1). And this little Babe, crying in the cold, crying in the dark, was He Who owned the world and all therein, yet found no birth-place but a stable. And in His later life He found in the hearts of the most of men neither welcome nor faith nor love. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel hath not known Me” (Isa. 1:3). “The Son of man hath not where to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20).

Now see the repetition of this same picture in Jesus’ Eucharistic life. There are so many in the world in whose hearts and lives there is no room for the Blessed Sacrament, no thought or care or love for the precious treasure of the Real Presence. Even amongst His own there are found not a few, cold, indifferent, selfish, who give but a poor and scant welcome to Him Who seeks admittance to their heart. “Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock” (Apoc. 3:20).

There are places where Jesus dwells in a hut almost as poor and bare as the stable of Bethlehem. Shall we leave Him there whilst we live in comfort? What have I done, within the limits of my ability, to help in providing a home for my Eucharistic God?

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

“They carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord” (Luke 2:22). Known only to a few, on this day is fulfilled a prophecy made over five hundred years before: “Who is left among you that saw this house [the Temple] in its first glory? . . . And I will move all nations, and the Desired of all nations shall come. . . . Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of hosts” (Agg. 2:4, 8, 10).

This day the Lord of hosts has come into His own house, in obedience to the law that He Himself gave to Moses amidst the thunders of Sinai. He came, a helpless Babe in His mother’s arms, to be presented to the Lord. “Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will, O God” (Hebr. 10:7).

The obedience that marked the blessed Saviour’s life on

earth marks His Eucharistic life now in a manner and degree equally wonderful and appealing. Do we realize even partially the extent to which Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has subjected His will to the will of His creatures? The obedience of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is a profound mystery of our faith.

The priest carries the Sacred Host in the cities and in the country to the homes of the sick; the Creator carried by His creature, God obeying man. The priest places the Sacred Host in the monstrance to receive the public adoration and praise of the faithful; he raises the Sacred Host in Benediction over bowed heads and hearts. And this Sacred Host is the God of all power, at Whose word all things move or are still.

Adore and praise and thank Him with all our hearts in this mystery of the obedience of the God-man in the Blessed Sacrament.

JESUS IS REDEEMED

“Thou shalt give the firstborn of thy sons to Me” (Exod. 22:29). “All of the male kind that openeth the womb shall be Mine. . . . The firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem” (Exod. 34:19, 20). Every firstborn son belongs to God in a special way, and was required to serve Him in the Temple. In place of this service he was to be redeemed by the offering of five shekels (Num. 18:16).

By submitting to the Mosaic law, and permitting Himself to be redeemed from the service of the Temple Jesus humbled Himself in a manner and to an extent beyond our power fully to grasp. Try to realize in some measure what this act implies. This little Babe in His mother’s arms pays the ransom for a service that He did not, could not owe, for this is He Who gave the law: “Thou shalt give the firstborn of thy sons to Me.”

The humility of Jesus in the Presentation, “taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), has its parallel in the humility of Jesus in the Real Presence, in which He comes to us in the form of bread, under the lowly appearance of an inanimate object. Could He find a more humble form in which

to appeal to our hearts to give Him shelter there, to comfort Him by our faith and love and desire for Him? It is as though He stood at our doors, like the Spouse in the Cantic: "The voice of my beloved, knocking: Open to me . . . for my head is full of dew and my locks of the drops of the night" (Cant. 5:2).

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). O Jesus, Thou hast humbled Thyself exceedingly to come to us thus, to gain the love of our poor hearts. Thy love has conquered. We are Thine, and Thine we wish always to be.

THE OFFERING OF THE POOR

"They carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord . . . and to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:22, 24). The offering for the redemption of a firstborn son from the service of the Temple was five shekels, about four dollars. For the purification of the mother, the offerings were a lamb and a dove, but for those who could not afford this expense two young pigeons were required. Jesus' mother was purified with the offering of the poor.

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty" (Isa. 48:10). At every step of our Lord's life on earth He accepted poverty as His portion: "Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour; He is poor" (Zach. 9:9); "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20); "Being rich, He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). When He came into the world He had only a manger, when He left the world He had only a cross and a crown of thorns.

Think of the poverty of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Look upon the Sacred Host, and see to what depths of poverty the God-man has subjected Himself. To all external appearances He is divested of the majesty of His divinity, of the beauty and splendor of His glorified humanity. He Who at this moment is receiving the praise and homage of the whole court of heaven, He, the God of all possession, is at the same moment before us on the altar, to all outward appear-

ance, motionless, helpless, a little white Host, wholly concealing the glory and the riches that are His. "Thine are riches, and Thine is glory, Thou hast dominion over all" (1 Par. 29:12). See how much He loves us, see how far He has gone to gain our love. Will I not give Him all the love of my heart?

WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL

"And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 2:25, 26).

"This is the Lord, we have patiently waited for Him, we shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation" (Isa. 25:9). For over four thousand years men had waited for the Saviour, and now He has come. Isaiah had prayed for this day: "I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp. . . . O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down!" (Isa. 62:1; 64:1. Many prophets had foretold the coming of this day; and Simeon, who waited for it in hope and longing love, was privileged to see it.

To us is given not only to live in the light and grace of the Redemption but to be in the actual presence of our Redeemer, to be right before His very body. We can look at the Sacred Host, and know with the unerring certainty of faith that He is here.

Many of us are like spoiled children. God is so good to us that we take His mercies and graces as though they were our due, or as though they were just a part of the routine of our lives. We seem to fail to realize, "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed; because His commiserations have not failed. They are new every morning" (Lam. 3:22, 23).

Do we long for the Consolation of Israel? Do we eagerly await the happy hour when we can come to Him in His Real Presence on the altar?

MY EYES HAVE SEEN THY SALVATION

"Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:29, 30). Behold the reward of Simeon's faith and love, of his longing to behold the Consolation of Israel. To him it was given to see, to hold in his arms the little Babe Who is God Himself, to be blessed, to be sanctified by the very touch of the Incarnate Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Truly, "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. 30:18).

So does God reward all who desire Him, who seek Him, whose earnest prayer is: "Who will grant me that I might know and find Him, and come even to His throne?" (Job 23:3.) They who seek Him shall find Him. God tells us through His prophet: "You shall seek Me, and shall find Me, when you shall seek Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

How fully is this fulfilled in those who desire and seek Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who come to Him eagerly, gladly in His Real Presence! How great is the reward He gives to those who can say with the Psalmist: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" (Ps. 52:2.) "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. 83:2, 3).

Our eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord. For we know and we believe that the Sacred Host that once was bread is now truly the living, glorified body of Christ, because He said: "This is My body." Nothing can be truer than this word of Truth Itself. Come to Him, then, for "He that shall find Me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Prov. 8:35).

FOR THE FALL AND THE RESURRECTION OF MANY

"Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted" (Luke 2:34). What a terrible mystery is this! Jesus came on earth to save the souls of men. "I am come that

they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). But there were many, oh, so many, who would not have the life offered to them: "You will not come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:40). There were many who would not heed the warning: "Seek, ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isa. 55:6). It is for such that "this Child is set for the fall of many."

As it was in Jesus' incarnate life so also it is in His Eucharistic life. He is here to give us the graces we need, to give us the very Source of grace, His own dear Self. He is set for our resurrection from the death of sin to the life of innocence, from the torpor of indifference and tepidity to a strong and active spiritual life. "Incline your ear and come to Me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. 55:3).

As it was in the days when Jesus "was seen upon earth and conversed with men" (Bar. 3:38), so also now, there are many who will not accept Him in the Blessed Sacrament. The Real Presence is set for the resurrection, indeed, of those who accept It, but for the fall of those who refuse It or abuse It, who say: "Let the Holy One of Israel cease from before us" (Isa. 30:11).

O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, give us to love Thee more and more. Keep us close to Thy Eucharistic Presence, that we may be close to Thee in heaven.

THEY SOUGHT HIM SORROWING

When Jesus was twelve years old He went with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem, to celebrate the solemn feast of the Pasch. "And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And, thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And, not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him" (Luke 2:43-45). For three days they went from place to place, everywhere receiving the same answer: "We have not seen your Son; we know not where He is."

Fear deepened into dread. In all that crowded city where

was He Who had been committed to their care, the most precious trust God ever gave to man? Had they failed in their duty? Only God knows how dark was the shadow, how grievous the burden upon their hearts, as they sought Him, sorrowing.

Have you ever thought what our lives would be if we went from church to church, and everywhere found only an empty tabernacle; if, by some strange circumstance, the Blessed Sacrament were with us no more? How weary the search, how bitter the disappointment, how keen the sense of loss! No more to kneel in humble faith, in adoring love before the Real Presence. No more to pour out our hearts to Him, laying our cares, our sorrows, our needs, even our failures at the feet of our Eucharistic God. How empty the church would be; how empty would be our hearts!

Thank God that this has never been our sad lot. Thank God that we can always find Him here, waiting for us. But do not keep Him waiting too long. Remember His words: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall not hunger" (John 6:35). Come to Him.

THEY FOUND HIM

"And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). On the third day of their wearying search in the crowded city Mary and Joseph came again to the Temple. In one of the large rooms were several doctors, or instructors in the Mosaic law, and in their midst was Jesus. Their long, heartbreaking search was over. Jesus was found.

Who can picture the relief, the joy of that moment? Fear, anxiety, sorrow, that lay as a dark and heavy cloud upon the hearts of Mary and Joseph, gave way before the brightness of Jesus' presence, even as the darkness of night gives way to the rising sun, that bathes all things in the glory of its light. They found Him, they have Him; it is enough.

We, too, have sought Jesus, and have found Him; we have found Him in the Blessed Sacrament. We have heeded the injunction: "Give therefore your hearts and your souls to

seek the Lord your God" (1 Par. 22:19). "Come ye to Him and be enlightened" (Ps. 33:6). And we have experienced the fulfillment of His promise: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28).

And so it is with all who love Jesus and seek their peace and happiness from Him and in Him. When they are with Him, close to Him, the heartaches, the burdens of life are easier to bear. Strength, courage, grace flow from the Real Presence as from a never ceasing fountain. "I am become in His presence as one finding peace" (Cant. 8:10). Thank God for giving us the grace to seek Him and to find Him in the Blessed Sacrament. Pray for those who have not found Him because they did not seek Him.

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

"And He said to them: How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49.) Everything that Jesus did had for its motive and object the fulfillment of His Father's will. For this He came into the world, for this He lived, labored, suffered, and died, to redeem the world. "For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "Then said I: Behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. 10:7).

Behold this Child of twelve years in the midst of the learned scribes of Israel. Already He is about His Father's business, teaching by the questions that He asked and the answers that He gave; "And, all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers" (Luke 2:47).

Jesus in His Eucharistic life is about His Father's business as truly as He was in the days when He walked on earth. Think not that in the Blessed Sacrament He is simply resting, living a merely passive life. Even as the sun radiates light and heat unceasingly on all the bodies that revolve around it, so from the Sacred Host flows a constant stream of divine graces, gifts, and favors.

Wonderful indeed is this power of light, strength, hope, and happiness that dwells so quietly in the tabernacle before

us. Here are repeated, in the spiritual order or sphere, the miracles of which Jesus spoke: "Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean; the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached" (Luke 7:22). Have we not had some experience of this? Have we ever come to Him, and have not been the better?

HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM TO NAZARETH

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke 2:51). Jesus went down to Nazareth to resume the life that He had begun twelve years before; a life of obscurity, poverty, and labor that was to last for eighteen years. This life, in its very silence, teaches us sublime lessons of deep meaning and great importance to our spiritual life, and finds a striking parallel in Jesus' Eucharistic life.

Because Jesus is both God and man every act of His human nature is of infinite value, each single act has the power to redeem the world. What an infinite treasury of atonement, of merits for us, of lessons taught and example given for our benefit has He heaped up in the thirty years of His hidden life! Only in heaven shall we know the value of these years.

Not for thirty years only but until the end of the world Jesus lives a hidden life in the Blessed Sacrament. Hidden from so many who know Him not, from so many who believe not that He is here. Hidden, even, from those who know Him and love Him and come to Him; hidden under the veil that conceals His presence so completely that only by faith can they know that He is here.

Do we wonder that in His incarnate life Jesus spent thirty years concealed from all the world save the little village of Nazareth? Do we wonder that in His Eucharistic life He conceals His living, glorified humanity as well as His divinity? In both instances He demands of all the will to accept Him and His grace. "Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; . . . receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (> Pet. 1:8, 9).

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS' HIDDEN LIFE

"And who shall know Thy thought, except Thou give wisdom and send Thy Holy Spirit from above?" (Wisd. 9:17.) The ways of God are mysterious indeed. His thoughts are above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways. We, in our imperfect understanding of true values, are prone to attach more importance to external things that appeal to the senses, and less to the spiritual forces working within, silently yet nonetheless efficiently.

The mystery of Jesus' hidden life of thirty years is an important part of the work of the Redemption. From it come to us merit, grace, sanctification, and salvation. From it come example for our imitation, and lessons for our guidance and help in the spiritual life. The hidden life of Jesus is a living book, on whose pages are written the lessons that we must learn and live if we would be true followers of Him Who said: "Learn of Me."

The Eucharistic life of Jesus is a striking counterpart of His hidden life in Nazareth. In His own quiet, effortless way Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament makes the influence of His presence felt, not only when many adorers kneel before Him but in the silent watches of the night and in the daylight hours when no one is present. The strong, yet silent power of His presence goes beyond the walls of the church to the homes and hearts of the faithful, and draws them to Him in love and desire when they cannot be physically present before Him.

Hidden in the tabernacle or enthroned on the altar, the little white Host is the source of our every grace and blessing, is the cause of our redemption, our sanctification, our salvation. For that little white Host is the great God Who made us and Who saved us. "Verily Thou art a hidden God" (Isa. 45:15).

HE WAS SUBJECT TO MARY AND JOSEPH

"And He . . . was subject to them" (Luke 2:51). Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph. Our minds stand in awe and wonderment at this stupendous fact. The God of all

power and dominion subjects His will to the will of Mary and Joseph. Of course it is only His human will that He bends in subjection; His divine will, omnipotent, absolute, eternal, cannot bend to anyone or anything. Yet the truth remains, He who obeys is God and man.

The obedience of Jesus to Mary and Joseph was a cheerful, willing, wholehearted obedience. It came in all simplicity from love and a sense of duty. He Who gave the command: "Honor thy Father and thy mother," Himself obeyed the command: by His example teaching us not only to obey but also how to obey. He honored obedience by obeying, "That all the children of Israel might see that it is good to obey the holy God" (Ecclus. 46:12).

In the blessed Sacrament are present the real body and soul of Christ, but they are His glorified body and soul as they were from the moment of His resurrection. Hence His body and soul cannot actually suffer from humiliation, indignity, or subjection. Nonetheless Jesus yields to the will of the priest who takes the Sacred Host from the tabernacle, to place It upon the altar or to give It to those who wish to receive their Lord in Holy Communion.

O mystery of divine condescension! God places Himself in the hands of a man, subjects Himself to his will, even as He did in the little home at Nazareth. O miracle of divine love, that God should go so far to show His love for us, to gain the love of our hearts! O blessed lesson in obedience! Will we learn this lesson, to the eternal profit of our souls?

HE HUMBLED HIMSELF

"Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3, 4). Jesus put before us a little child as an example of the humility that must be ours if we would enter the kingdom of heaven. He went further, teaching us by His own example: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

The humility of Jesus is one of the most stupendous mys-

teries of His incarnate life. He was a little Child, with all the helplessness of a child, depending for support, guidance, help, for His very life and sustenance upon Mary and Joseph. In His youth and early manhood He humbled Himself before Mary and Joseph in subjection to their will and to the limitation that their poverty imposed upon Him.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus shows the same humility, even greater humility. Look at the Sacred Host, and behold our God, to all outward appearance, more helpless than a little child. He is clothed now not in the form of a child but in the form of bread. He does not even stretch out His hands, nor give outward voice to His plea to be taken to our hearts, to find shelter there. He goes where the priest takes Him with the same humility, submissiveness, subjection that He showed to Mary and Joseph.

This miracle of love, of humility is before us whenever we come into the Real Presence. There is a veil before our eyes. Alas, for some there is a veil before their soul, and they fail to grasp even partly the miracle of humility that is before them. With the blind man we pray: "Lord, that I may see" (Luke 18:41).

HE IS POOR

To most of us poverty seems harsh, repugnant, and depressing. Yet our Lord chose it as His portion on earth. He desired it not as an end but as a means. He became poor to make us rich; and He wishes us to become poor, at least in spirit, that we may acquire the riches of heaven. By accepting poverty for Himself Jesus blessed it, and gave to it the power of bringing to us a great good.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). By His example Jesus taught us that poverty, borne patiently for His sake, leads to true riches. By His poverty He taught us the truth that the riches of this life are as nothing compared to the riches of heaven. By His poverty He taught us that true life consists not in earthly possessions and pleasures but in God's grace that gives eternal life.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus teaches us these same lessons, gives us the same example of poverty. When we look

at the Sacred Host we know that this is He of Whom David said: "Thine are riches, and Thine is glory, Thou hast dominion over all, in Thy hand is power and might; in Thy hand, greatness and the empire of all things" (i Par. 29:12). Yes, here is the God of all possession; yet to all outward appearance, He has divested Himself of everything, and comes to us in the form of bread.

Blessed are they who have taken the vow of poverty and are faithful in its observance. Blessed are they who, though not bound by vow, strive to follow in the footsteps of Him Who, "became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In the Real Presence we will find inspiration and courage to bear for Him what He bore for us.

IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER?

Thus did the Jews of Nazareth speak of Jesus when in later years He preached in their synagogue. He was known to them as the carpenter's son. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55.)

For many years Jesus worked in the little carpenter shop at Nazareth; at first, helping His foster father, then after Joseph's death, supporting His mother. Thus did Jesus honor and bless labor by being a laborer Himself. He thought it not beneath Him to labor with His hands, in the sweat of His brow, to gain His daily bread. Thus did He atone for sin, Adam's sin and our own sins. He subjected Himself to this punishment of sin, and by so doing He made that a blessing which at first was a curse. "Cursed is the earth in thy work. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:17, 19).

In the Blessed Sacrament is present the divine Carpenter. By His presence and by His grace He molds and shapes our souls, our present and future lives, even as in the days of His life in Nazareth He molded and shaped the objects upon which He worked with His hands.

As in the days of Nazareth so now He labors, but His tools are different. Then He worked with tools of wood and metal; now He works with the tools of the spirit, inspiration, guid-

ance, grace, strength, and comfort. Yet even then, at Nazareth, He worked upon souls for all generations to come, with the intangible tools of His example, teaching lessons that only He could teach. As then, so now the divine Carpenter, the Sacred Host, is working upon our souls. Every time we come to Him, responsive to His call and to His grace, He molds and shapes our souls to greater holiness, He brings them nearer to perfection, He prepares us for heaven.

JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE AND THE REAL PRESENCE

JESUS* FAREWELL TO HIS MOTHER

NO SON or daughter ever loved a mother as Jesus loved His mother. And yet He left her for our sake. He left her to begin the work of His public life, to fulfill the prophecy: "Behold, Thy Saviour cometh: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him" (Isa. 62:11). He left her to answer the cry: "For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp" (Isa. 62:1).

Standing at the threshold of the humble home at Nazareth, Jesus' last look was upon the saddened face of His mother. He knew and she knew what this farewell meant. The peaceful days at Nazareth would never come again. Only God knows the tenderness and the sorrow of that parting. Her pain was His pain; and thus He left her.

In the Blessed Sacrament are Jesus' humanity and divinity; His glorified humanity as it was in the Resurrection. Hence His body and soul are beyond the reach of actual suffering or sorrow. Nonetheless, in some way not understood by us, He is affected by our conduct toward Him, by our love or indifference, by our fidelity or ingratitude.

It cannot be a matter of indifference to our Eucharistic Saviour that some love Him, some hate Him, and many have no thought nor care for Him. As in His passion He cried out: "I thirst," so in the Real Presence He thirsts for souls, for their love, devotion, and fidelity. Not that He needs them, but He deigns to desire them. When they are refused Him, can you think that He is indifferent, unmindful, or unheeding? Never give Him cause to say: "With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me" (Zach. 13:6).

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Wherefore He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of reward" (Luke 4:18, 19). Our Lord Himself quoted these words of the prophet Isaias; He added, "This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears" (Luke 4:21). In His public life Jesus taught by word and example, and by His miracles that forced from the Jews the acknowledgment, "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37). Of these miracles Jesus said: "The works themselves which I do, give testimony of Me" (John 5:36).

The miracles of our blessed Lord's public life have their counterpart in the miracles of grace wrought by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And the greatest of all is the miracle of the Real Presence Itself, a miracle of faith and love, transcending the poor, weak powers of man to grasp or even realize. In the Blessed Sacrament are wrought again and again miracles of healing, of enlightenment, of comfort and consolation, of life restored and strength regained; miracles in comparison to which the physical miracles are less, even as the physical is less than the spiritual.

We ourselves have known, and probably have experienced, some of these miracles wrought by the Real Presence. But there are many that will not be known until God reveals them in heaven. Many a soul in danger saved, many a grace given when most needed; hope restored to the nigh despairing, strength to the weak and wavering, and peace to the troubled soul; all these and many others are the unseen miracles that Jesus works in the Sacrament of His love.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

"The people were in admiration at His doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power" (Matt. 7:28, 29). Jesus came to atone for sin, to restore lost innocence, to open heaven. This He did by His life, sufferings, and death. He

came to show us how to profit by His atonement, how to gain and keep innocence and grace, how to find and travel the road to heaven. This He did by His teachings; "For this was I born, and for this I came into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth" (John 18:37). Yes, Jesus gave testimony to the truth, but many would not accept His testimony. "If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). "I am come in the name of My Father, and you receive Me not" (John 5:43).

As in the days of His public life so now, but in a different way, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament teaches us "the words of eternal life" (John 6:69). He speaks not to the ear but to the soul, needing not words but conveying clearly and forcefully the thoughts He wishes to give. "I will speak to her heart" (Osee 2:14).

"Think of Me more, talk to Me more, listen to Me more." When we kneel in fervent adoration before the tabernacle does it not seem, at least at times, that Jesus speaks thus to us? Certainly this is what He wishes of us. He is our Friend, Counselor, and Guide; why then do we not seek help, counsel, and guidance from Him Who can give them best?

Let this be our prayer: "Shew, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths. Direct me in Thy truth, and teach me" (Ps. 24:4, 5); "Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge" (Ps. 118:66). Then listen to His answer.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS* PUBLIC LIFE

The Scriptures tell us: "The path of the just as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). And: "In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. 35:10). The example of our blessed Lord's public life is a shining light that shows us the path by which we must walk, the life that we must live. His every act is a lesson to us. The virtues manifested in Jesus' incarnate life on earth are a guide, an incentive, an encouragement impelling us, in our own poor measure and way, to follow in His footsteps, to do as He did, to live as He lived. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

The blessed Lord warned us: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his Lord" (Matt. 10:24). A Christian, therefore, must study the example of Christ, and follow it.

The same lessons that Jesus taught us by His example in His public life He now teaches us by the example that He gives in His Eucharistic life. The same virtues that He practiced then He practices now, though the manner be different. The same patience, meekness, kindness, unselfishness, thoughtfulness, compassion, the same zeal for His Father's glory, the same love for souls that He showed then He possesses now in the Blessed Sacrament.

Then His example was manifest to the senses, now it is known only by faith. In either instance it is as real and present as He is Himself. The lessons taught by His example are as needed now as they were when first He taught them.

Lovers of the Blessed Sacrament, will we follow Him, will we learn the lessons He teaches from the tabernacle? Surely this is our answer: "And now we follow Thee with all our heart" (Dan. 3:41).

THE PATIENCE OF JESUS

"And account the longsuffering of our Lord, salvation" (2 Pet. 3:15). The patience of Jesus, especially in His dealings with the weak and the fallen, is one of the most comforting lessons of His public life. How fully realized in the Blessed Saviour is the word of Isaias: "Therefore the Lord waiteth, that He may have mercy on you" (30:18). Yes, He waits, oh, so patiently, for the response that will bring from Him forgiveness and life.

Marvelous indeed was Jesus' patience in the face of the opposition, of the persistent hatred and malice of the scribes and Pharisees who dogged His steps, "lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch something from His mouth, that they might accuse Him" (Luke 11:54). Strong and outspoken in His denunciation of sin, Jesus was meek and gentle and patient in His own defense.

This same patience Jesus manifests in the Blessed Sacrament. From the tabernacle He looks into the hearts of many

who know not that He is here; "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (John 1:10). He looks into the hearts of those who know that He is here but who do not care; "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11).

O patient Jesus! as in Your public life so now in Your Eucharistic life Your patience has been grievously abused. As You once said to the Jews so might You well say now: "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (Matt. 17:16.) How long, O Lord, will men try Your patience? How long will they close their eyes and their hearts to the divine Saviour Who deigns to dwell with them? O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! grant that we may never abuse Your patience, but may by our love comfort You for those who grieve You.

THE MEEKNESS OF JESUS

"Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke" (Matt. 21:5). Thus did Jesus enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, a King with no crown or royal raiment, but poor, meek, and humble. What a contrast between the meekness of Jesus and the pride and angry contempt of His enemies! But this very contrast shows how greatly needed is this lesson which cost our Lord so much to teach.

Meekness was a striking characteristic of Jesus' public life and ministry: "Who, when He was reviled did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). When the Jews blasphemed Him: "Do not we say well that Thou . . . hast a devil?" He answered simply: "I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and you have dishonoured Me" (John 8:48, 49). He could well say: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

How manifest is the meekness of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! The King of kings and Lord of lords is on our altars, but we see no crown nor royal robes, not even the majesty and the beauty of His face upon which the angels love to gaze. All is shrouded in the lowly mantle of the appearance of bread. Our King comes to us meek and humble.

From the tabernacle Jesus sees so many passing by the church with no thought or care of Him Who is there for their sake. Silently His grace calls to their hearts. In some it strikes a response, in most it falls upon a heart cold, indifferent, perhaps hardened and bitter. And in the heart of Jesus there is only the sad plaint: "You will not come to Me, that you may have life" (John 5:40). Heed the lesson of His example: "My son, keep thy soul in meekness" (Ecclus. 10:31).

THE GENTLENESS OF JESUS

"He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His* voice in the streets" (Matt. 12:19). St. Matthew quotes this prophecy of Isaias as applying to the blessed Saviour. The gentleness of Jesus, so often manifested in His public life, is one of the most consoling lessons that His example gives, drawing us to Him by the cords of grateful, trusting love. Who would not love and trust Him of Whom the prophet said: "The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not extinguish" (Matt. 12:20)?

The gentleness of Jesus is a picture that we all love to look upon. His forbearance with those who opposed Him: "With them that hated peace I was peaceable" (Ps. 119:7). His sympathetic thought and care for the afflicted: "As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. 66:13). The gracious welcome that He gives to all who seek Him: "For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee" (Ps. 85:5).

As in His public life so also in His Eucharistic life, all may come to Jesus with full confidence that a gracious welcome awaits them. He Himself said: "Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out" (John 6:37). Only this does He require, that we come to Him in faith and hope and love: "Seek Him in simplicity of heart. For . . . He sheweth Himself to them that have faith in Him" (Wisd. 1:1, 2).

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). The same gentleness that drew souls to Jesus in His public life draws souls to Him in His Eucharistic life. Saint and sinner, the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich,

the happy and the sad feel the gentle attraction of the Real Presence. If they heed the Master's call and come to their Eucharistic God, "their hearts shall live for ever and ever" (Ps. 21:27).

THE KINDNESS OF JESUS

"With everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee, said the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. 54:8). Kindness may be described as charity in which prominence is given to the qualities of gentleness, tenderness, graciousness, and courtesy. It might be termed the cream of charity. This kindness was strikingly shown in Jesus' public life.

He was kind to all, especially to the poor and sick in body and soul. His kindness to sinners was so marked that His enemies made it a matter of reproach to Him: "Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. 9:11.) Truly He was "kind to the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). Yes, even to those who opposed Him and His teaching: "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (Rom. 2:4.) The kindness of Jesus was a powerful influence in drawing souls to Him, softening and warming hearts hard and cold before, making them receptive to His grace.

"I will remember the tender mercies of the Lord . . . for the multitude of His good things to the house of Israel, which He hath given them according to His kindness" (Isa. 63:7). How much more reason have we to say this, we who possess the greatest of all His gifts to men, the Real Presence! For from this infinite treasury of mercy and love flows a constant stream of kindness that warns and enlightens, that gives comfort, strength, and happiness, that brings earth nearer to heaven.

From the tabernacle Jesus sends His grace, unseen messengers of His loving kindness, calling to all: "Come to Me . . . and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28). Come, and we will experience the kindness of the Lord. The nearer we are in spirit and in body to the very Source of kindness, the more we partake of Its gifts and graces. "We shall be filled with the good things of Thy house" (Ps. 64:5).

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

“And, seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). God’s mercy embraces all: “The mercy of God is upon all flesh” (Ecclus. 18:12). But there are two classes of men who have a special appeal to the compassion of Jesus, the sick in body and the sick in soul. “For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities” (Hebr. 4:15).

The ills and sorrows of suffering humanity went straight to the loving heart of Jesus, and brought the instant response of His compassion and mercy. “Thou hast set my tears in Thy sight” (Ps. 55:9). His compassion went further. He saw the souls that were sick unto death by sin, souls whom He loved: “Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Matt. 9:2); “How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him” (Ecclus. 17:28.)

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus has the same compassion for the suffering and sorrowing, and for those bound and helpless in the chains of sin. From the tabernacle He hears the supplication: “O grant us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man” (Ps. 107:13); “Help me, and I shall be saved” (Ps. 118:117). And from the tabernacle comes the answer: “Cry to Me, and I will hear thee, and I will shew thee great things and sure things which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:3). Yes, He will show the great and sure things of His pitying love and comforting help, such as man could know from Him alone.

Come to Him, we who are burdened with suffering or sorrow or that bear the heavy yoke of sin; come to the tabernacle. “Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid” (Hebr. 4:16).

THE UNSELFISHNESS OF JESUS

“But I seek not My own glory” (John 8:50). Wearied with long journeying Jesus sat by Jacob’s well at Sichar in Samaria. A woman came to the well. Thinking not of His

great fatigue, Jesus spoke to her at length. When the Apostles urged Him to rest and eat, His answer was: "I have meat to eat which you know not. . . . My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me" (John 4:32, 34).

With no consideration for His own convenience, comfort, or needs, Jesus spent and was spent for those who loved Him, for those who hated Him, for the indifferent and for those who knew Him not. Often He spent the night in prayer, and the following day in preaching, curing the sick, consoling the afflicted, ministering to the ills of body and soul; always caring for others, with no thought for self.

Have you not wondered why the blessed Saviour remains always on our altars, when the church is filled with loving adorers, and when no human being is with Him? He is waiting for a soul steeped in sin and on the brink of hell, waiting to give grace and life if that soul will come to Him. He is waiting for a soul sorely tempted, in grave danger, waiting to save that soul if it will come to Him. He is waiting for a soul burdened with sorrow and trial, waiting to give courage, patience, peace, if that soul will come.

O Jesus, Whose unselfish love for me keeps Thee a prisoner in the tabernacle, with all my heart I praise Thee, thank Thee, give Thee love for love. Teach me to be unselfish in my love and service to Thee, to make some sacrifice for Thee Who gave up everything for me.

THE TRANQUILLITY OF JESUS

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you" (John 14:27). It was at the Last Supper that Jesus spoke these words, giving to His Apostles a share in the peace and tranquillity, in the serene and unruffled composure that so strongly marked His public life. When occasion demanded He was vigorous and outspoken in His denunciation of wrong. But, no matter how strongly the storm of hatred, enmity, even violence raged around Him, His soul was as calm as the depths of the ocean untouched by the tempest above.

We marvel at the wonderful serenity of Jesus when His soul was so bitterly hurt by the willful blindness, the

obstinacy, the unrelenting hatred of His enemies. "They repaid Me evil for good, and hatred for My love" (Ps. 108:5). We marvel at His tranquillity in the face of the indifference, coldness, ingratitude of many who refused His call to "Come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21).

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus meets with the same unbelief, hostility, indifference, neglect that He experienced in His public life. Many do not believe that He is here, nor wish to believe; and there are those who believe that He is here, yet care not. All this, were He capable of suffering, would wound His sacred Heart as it did in the days of old. Yet even as then so now there is no bitterness nor recrimination, only the pleading of His peaceful, loving Heart: "Incline your ear, and come to Me" (Isa. 55:3); only the promise: "He will speak peace unto His people" (Ps. 84:9).

Come then to Him, and we will receive a share in the peace that is His and that He gave to His Apostles: "My peace I give unto you." "And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called" (Col. 3:15).

THE ZEAL OF JESUS

"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up" (John 2:17). The blessed Saviour was filled with indignation at the desecration of the Temple by the Jews who made it a place of traffic. He drove them out with the denunciation: "Make not the house of My Father a house of traffic." So great was His zeal for His Father's honor.

"My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me" (John 4:34). Jesus' zeal to do His Father's will was a burning fire. When yet a Child He said: "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). This was His life, always about His Father's business. Jesus' zeal for souls gave Him no rest. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He is the good Shepherd Who gives His life for His sheep. "And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50.)

This same zeal brought Jesus upon our altars and keeps Him there, His zeal to do His Father's will, His zeal for the salvation of our souls. "No man cometh to the Father but

by Me” (John 14:6). He draws our souls to Himself in the Real Presence, and so draws them to the Father, that the Father may be glorified and loved with the Son and the Holy Ghost. In the tabernacle He is still about His Father’s business.

“I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?” (Luke 12:49.) Jesus wishes to kindle the fire of faith and love in hearts dead in sin, to restore warmth to hearts cold and indifferent, to strengthen the love, ardor, devotion of the faithful. This He does for those who come to Him in the tabernacle, to be filled with His graces: “Come . . . and be filled with My fruits” (Ecclus. 24:26).

JESUS' PASSION AND THE REAL PRESENCE

THE GLORIFIED BODY OF JESUS

THE parallel between the passion of Christ and the Real Presence can be understood only if we keep clearly and constantly before our minds that in the Real Presence Jesus does not actually suffer either in body or soul. The living-body of Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, the same body that once suffered and died. But it is His body as it was from the moment of the Resurrection, His glorified body, beyond the reach of suffering, sorrow, or death.

St. Paul says that Christ "will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21). And he tells us some of the qualities of this body. "It shall rise in incorruption ... it shall rise in glory ... it shall rise in power ... it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

This is the body of Jesus in the Real Presence, just as it is in heaven, immortal, glorious, with a beauty beyond all human comparison, powerful, no longer subject to hurt or harm from any source, and endowed with the wondrous qualities of a spirit, free from the restraint of material surroundings. Were Jesus to raise for one moment the veil that conceals from human sight the glory of His risen body in the Real Presence, from that moment the Blessed Sacrament would no longer be a mystery of faith to those who saw, and they would lose all future merit of believing.

Although Jesus does not and cannot actually suffer in the Real Presence, yet there is a parallel in His passion and in His life in the Blessed Sacrament; and this parallel is real. In deepest humility, in awe and reverence, yet in loving trust, we enter upon these meditations. He will guide our steps, for here we cannot walk alone. We place our hands in His, and fear not.

GETHSEMANI AND THE REAL PRESENCE

In the Agony in the Garden Jesus saw all that He was to endure in His passion. He saw Himself mocked, spit upon, struck in the face, as He stood a prisoner before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Council. He saw every torment inflicted on Him when He stood before Pilate, the angry mob clamoring for His death. He saw the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the cross placed on His shrinking shoulders, the awful journey to Calvary, the crucifixion.

He saw more and worse. He saw Himself burdened with the fearful weight, the awful presence of all the sins of the world: "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (i Pet. 2:24). No wonder He cried out: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. . . . My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Matt. 26:38, 39).

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus sees the devout souls who come to Him and comfort Him by their faith and love. But He also sees the many who give Him no comfort, who renew the cause of their Saviour's sufferings and death. And He loves these souls; He is waiting for them, but they will not come.

In the Real Presence is the same patient, loving heart that suffered so much in Gethsemani. Though Jesus' glorified humanity cannot suffer or die, yet He is not indifferent or unaffected. From the tabernacle He sees the souls who "have fled from the praise of God and from His blessing" (Wis. 15:19), who "are enemies to their own soul" (Tob. 12:10), of whom it was said: "They repaid Me evil for good, and hatred for My love" (Ps. 108:5). How can He be indifferent, He Who came to save souls, Who died that they might live? How can anyone hurt the loving heart of Jesus that, were it necessary, would suffer and die again for us?

THE KISS OF JUDAS

What depths of sorrow and hurt are revealed by the words of Jesus, "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48.) He, one of the twelve whom Jesus had loved and chosen, to whom He had given so many and great

graces and privileges, he betrayed his Master and Lord, betrayed Him to death, betrayed Him with a kiss.

At the Last Supper Jesus had said of Judas, "He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against Me" (John 13:18). The disciple turned against his Master and Friend, a man betrayed his God. At so great a hurt the Heart of Jesus cried out in anguish: "If My enemy had reviled Me I would verily have borne with it. . . . But thou . . . who didst take sweetmeats together with Me; in the house of God we walked with consent" (Ps. 54:13-15).

In the Real Presence Jesus is exposed to the same sad, bitter trial. It is true His heart now cannot be tortured by the sorrow that He endured from the traitor's kiss in Gethsemani, for He is above the reach of pain and sorrow. Nonetheless, from the tabernacle He sees the souls of those who once loved Him, followed Him, and received His graces and favors, who afterward sold their Master and His friendship for the paltry price of thirty pieces of silver, for the sinful pleasures of a day or an hour.

O we who love Jesus, plead with Him so to increase and strengthen our love that nothing can ever induce us to falter in our loyalty to Him. Offer to our Eucharistic God our allegiance and our love to atone for those who betray Him by the commission of grievous sin. Let our love bind up the awful wound that His sacred Heart received when Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss.

THEY LEFT HIM

"Then His disciples, leaving Him, all fled away" (Mark 14:50). Jesus had foretold this: "Behold, the hour cometh and it is now come, that you . . . shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John 16:32). When Jesus most needed the support and comfort of His disciples' presence, they failed Him. Another blow to His sacred Heart already wounded by the treachery of Judas. Peter and John, it is true, followed Jesus but from a distance.

And so it has been ever since. When Jesus asks, "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt. 20:22). many

have not the courage, and fall away. Some, unlike the Apostles, never return. Others follow at a distance; they fail in the full understanding of Jesus' words, "The servant is not greater than his master" (John 15:20). These are still at a distance from the complete fulfillment of the Master's will at any cost.

In the Real Presence the same loving Heart, that was so hurt when His Apostles, "leaving Him, all fled away," sees many who profess to love Him fail in the full measure of the love and loyalty they owe to Him in the Blessed Sacrament. They follow Him, but at a distance. They come to Him seldom save when they are obliged under penalty of sin. And often, when they come, their hearts are not with Him. He sees others of the faith who never come. Yet to both: "Return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee" (Jer. 3:1).

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is asking us to comfort Him for those who today walk with Him no longer, who come to Him no more. He asks us to bear Him company, to share the sorrow that once was His, the burden that He bore in Gethsemani, when His disciples left Him.

THE DENIAL BY PETER

"But Peter saith to Him: Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I. And Jesus saith to him: Amen I say to thee, today, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice" (Mark 14:29, 30). "Peter saith to Him: Yea, though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee" (Matt. 26:35). We know what happened that night when "he denied with an oath: I know not the Man" (Matt. 26:72).

Deep was the hurt of Peter's denial, for it came from one who loved his Lord, it came from one to whom Jesus had promised: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). But Peter's love was not yet strong enough to stand the test. Had he humbled himself at the Master's warning and prayed for strength, Jesus might have been spared this bitter blow.

In the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of love, Jesus looks for an answering love strong and enduring. He looks for a humble love that finds all its strength in God and none within itself. He looks for an unselfish love that refuses Him nothing, a consoling love that seeks to comfort Him for those who deny Him.

Many there are who deny the Real Presence, refusing to submit their minds and wills to the acceptance of this mystery; "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John 6:61.) God's word, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29), is lost on them. Others there are who deny the Real Presence by their conduct, their lives. These are members of the household of the Faith who seldom or never are seen before the altar in adoration and love. Ours is the happy privilege to comfort Jesus in the Real Presence for those who deny Him. Thank Him for this privilege, and use it well.

THEY STRUCK HIM

Jesus stood, a prisoner, before the high priests Annas and Caiphaz and the Jewish Council; "And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy; and the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands" (Mark 14:65). O the horror of it, to strike the sacred face of Jesus, that face on which the angels love to gaze, to strike that face so sad, yet full of love and pitying mercy!

Woe to that hand that was raised against its God, that struck Him Who gave it life and power! Woe to him who by his sin strikes a deadly blow against the Saviour Who suffered and died for that sinner! As though a son should stab his father. As though one should strike a friend who was in the very act of saving the life of him that struck the blow.

In the Blessed Sacrament is the same loving Jesus Who suffered this grievous outrage from the hands of wicked men. It is His glorified body that now cannot be struck or hurt, that is now beyond the reach of those who would compass His death if they could. Yet it is the same body,

it is the same loving, merciful Saviour. And He sees now so many renewing the cause of the pain and sorrow that He endured when "the servants struck Him."

Mortal sin is a bitter blow to the heart of Jesus, coming from those whom He loves so much. O we who love Him, do all that God's grace gives us power to do to atone for those who so easily offend Him grievously. Offer our sufferings, our penances, our prayers and good works to Jesus in the Real Presence; for seeing them, He will take comfort.

ART THOU THE SON OF GOD?

"Again the high priest asked Him, and said to Him: Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed God? And Jesus said to him: I am" (Mark 14:61, 62). Grievous was the guilt of those who had witnessed His miracles, who had heard His words, who had read the Scriptures that gave testimony to Him, who yet refused to believe. "If I had not come and spoken to them . . . if I had not done among them the works that no other man had done, they would not have sin" (John 15:22, 24).

Grievous was the hurt to the loving Heart of Jesus at the refusal of the Jews to accept Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11); "Through deceit they have refused to know Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. 9:6). Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying: "If thou also hadst known . . . the things that are to thy peace" (Luke 19:42). They could have known.

If Jesus could weep in the Blessed Sacrament He would weep for those who do not believe in His Real Presence. His words are clear: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . And the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51, 52); "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26). Let them remember: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

If Jesus could feel sorrow in the Blessed Sacrament He would grieve for those Catholics who act as though they did not believe in the Real Presence. "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt.

15:8); “They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him” (Titus 1:16). It is as though they, like Caiphias, cry out: “Art Thou the Son of God?” For, if they believe in the Real Presence, how can they stay away from their God?

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

What a scene is this, Pilate sitting in judgment against Jesus, a creature judging his Creator, the incarnate Son of God a prisoner, awaiting sentence from a man! To such length did Jesus' love for man bring Him, to suffer so awful a humiliation, so terrible a reversal of position. “There is one Lawgiver and Judge That is able to destroy and to deliver” (James 4:12). And This is He Who stands meek and silent before Pilate, the while the angels look down from heaven in awe and adoring love.

Thus did Jesus atone for sin. Surely that must be a grievous evil that needed an atonement so great. “He hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty” (Job 15:25). Surely that must be a love surpassingly great by which “Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us” (Eph. 5:2).

In the Real Presence Jesus has the same love for souls that He had when He stood, a prisoner, before Pilate. Then He bore His chains, hard and heavy that they were, to loose from our souls the chains of sin. In the Real Presence He bears no chains, but the selfsame love forges the links of a golden chain that binds our souls to Him and to heaven.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus, by His very presence, draws our souls with the cords of an undying love. What heart is there that, understanding the reality and the reason of His presence, does not answer love for love? If such a heart there be, cold, hard, and deadened by sin, yet Jesus' love in the Real Presence is so great that He stands before that heart and asks for shelter: “Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock” (Apoc. 3:20). Will not so great, so burning a love melt the coldest, most hardened heart?

ART THOU A KING?

Pilate asked this question of Jesus Who stood before him in no royal apparel but in chains, a prisoner awaiting sentence of death. Yes, He is a King and more than a king: "Who is the Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (i Tim. 6:15). This is He of Whom the Scriptures tell: "There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful King, and greatly to be feared, Who sitteth upon His throne, and is the God of dominion" (Ecclus. 1:8). But Pilate believed not.

Many, since then, have refused to accept Jesus as their King and Master. Many now refuse to acknowledge His claim, "All souls are Mine" (Ezech. 18:4). Many say in word or in act, "We are revolted, we will come to Thee no more" (Jer. 2:31). Like the Jews who rejected Jesus, saying: "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), the sinner cries out: "Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what doth it profit us if we pray to Him?" (Job 21:15.)

In the Blessed Sacrament our bodily eyes see no evidence of the majesty and power of the great King of kings. Were Jesus to lift the veil that hides the glory of His Real Presence our churches, perhaps, could not hold the crowds that would come. He wishes rather to draw us to Him by faith and love: "I will espouse thee to Me in faith" (Osee 2:20); "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29); "Whom, having not seen, you love" (1 Pet. 1:8).

Ours is the duty, the privilege to adore and praise our Eucharistic King, asking not to see, seeking only to please, waiting for the day when His glory will be revealed in heaven. Ours is the duty to pray that God will hasten the day when "The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen" (Apoc. 11:15).

WHOM WILL WE HAVE?

"Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus That is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:17.) What a choice is this?

Whom will you have, Jesus or Barabbas, God or man, the Saviour of men or a robber and murderer? "And so Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus . . . to be crucified" (Mark 15:15). "Good is set against evil, and life against death; so also is the sinner against a just man" (Ecclus. 33:15).

Often has this choice been repeated by sinful man. God gave us free will that we might give Him the service of that will in free, loving obedience. Many there are who have chosen against God, have chosen sin; "Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:14). Thank God, there are also those who can say: "I have chosen the way of truth. . . . I have chosen Thy precepts" (Ps. 118:30, 173). There are those "rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time" (Hebr. 11:25).

We, too, must take our choice. Whom will we have, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Who is here for our sake, to give Himself to us, to gain our hearts? Or will we have Barabbas? Will we have the comforts and pleasures of the world in preference to loving and serving our Sacramental Saviour? We cannot have both.

Our love and devotion to Jesus in the Real Presence will require the sacrifice of those things that would keep us from Him. He is a jealous Friend: He wishes all our service and love. "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23:26). Give Him all our love, for He gives us all His love. Choose wisely. Whom will we serve? What sacrifices have we made for the Blessed Sacrament?

JESUS IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

"But they cried again, saying: crucify Him, crucify Him. . . . And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23:21, 24). What a terrible, unspeakable thing is this, a man condemns to death his God! "The Author of life you killed" (Acts 3:15). In His human nature Jesus endured a humiliation and agony of mind beyond our power to grasp, when He permitted Himself to be the victim of the cowardice of Pilate and of the hatred and malice of

the Jews. He came to give them life, and they condemned Him to death.

Sin was the cause of Jesus' death. Though they may not fully realize it, they who sin grievously are "crucifying again to themselves the Son of God" (Hebr. 6:6). Of such the prophet speaks: "Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God also?" (Isa. 7:13.) "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people?" (Deut. 32:6.)

Was it not enough that Jesus should endure once the humiliation of being condemned to death, that we might be freed from the sentence of eternal death? His love thought not, and found again a humiliation, in appearance like to that which He suffered from the hands of Pilate. In the Real Presence Jesus is not actually humiliated, because His glorified body and soul cannot suffer. Nevertheless, in the Blessed Sacrament both His divinity and His humanity are as completely hidden as though they were not.

From the tabernacle Jesus looks into the souls of men. He sees in some the cowardice of Pilate, in others something of the malice and hatred of the Jewish leaders. He sees sin that kills grace, and would kill the Author of grace if it could. Pray that we may never renew the cause of Jesus' humiliation when Pilate sentenced Him to death.

THE SCOURGING

To gain even a partial insight into the passion of Christ we must keep clearly and steadily before our minds that Jesus is almighty God; that He became man, with a body and soul capable of suffering like ours. The reality of His divinity, the reality of the awful things He endured in His human nature are very hard to grasp; many fail to do so, and hence are but little impressed.

The pain of the scourging that Jesus endured was so fearful that not one of us has the courage to plumb its terrible depths. The sorrow of His soul that men could so hurt Him Who loved them as only God can love, was even a greater hurt than the pain of body. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad. From the sole of the foot unto the

top of the head there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores" (Isa. 1:5, 6).

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus sees so many careful to spare themselves suffering, but heedless of the suffering that their Saviour endured. He sees so many giving themselves every pleasure, with no thought nor care that often in so doing they renew the cause for which He bore the cruel scourging. "And He said: Surely they are My people, children that will not deny; so He became their Saviour. . . . But they provoked to wrath, and afflicted the spirit of His Holy One" (Isa. 63:8, 10).

We who love Jesus, come to Him in His Real Presence. Mourn with Him in the pain and sorrow of His scourging. Mourn with Him for those who even now renew the cause of His pain and sorrow. "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me . . . and for one that would comfort Me" (Ps. 68:21). Let Him not again say: "And I found none."

THE CROWN OF THORNS

Probably all of us have suffered from a severe headache. Its throbbing pain gives one no rest, and the whole body suffers in sympathy. This is but a shadow of what Jesus endured when they gave Him a crown of thorns, and pressed the thorns into His most sacred head, piercing and tearing flesh and nerves until the agony was beyond endurance.

In His heart Jesus bore a pain more grievous still; it was the crown of sorrow, of humiliation, of hurt at the malice and ingratitude of those who so cruelly treated their King and their God. "O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? answer thou Me" (Mich. 6:3).

In the Real Presence our blessed Lord no longer bears the crown of thorns, His heart is not now tortured by the sorrow that once was His, for it is His glorified body that is before us, incapable now of pain or sorrow. Were His heart capable of sorrowing now, how it would be pierced and broken by the grievous sins of those for whom He has done so much, to whom He has given so much, even Himself in the Real Presence! For again the sinner pierces the

head and heart of Jesus with the thorns of his sins, inasmuch as he renews the cause of the agony of Jesus when first He bore His crown of thorns.

Dear Jesus, forgive me if, among the bitter thorns that once pierced and tore Thy sacred brow, there was one that my own sins had placed there. Give me grace, by true and deep contrition, to close the wound that I, alas, had given Thee. Give me grace, by my fervent love and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to comfort Thee for those who still would give Thee a crown of thorns.

JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

At Pilate's command the soldiers brought the cross. Jesus looked at it, shuddering with horror of this instrument of torture and death. "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Matt. 26:39). He looked at it with love and desire, for this was the instrument through which would be effected the Redemption of the world according to the will of His Father. "Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt."

"And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary" (John 19:17). Yes, He was bearing His own cross. But why? Because if He had not borne it, all who sinned grievously would have to bear the weight of their sins forever. If Jesus had not borne His cross, grace, peace, and strength of soul, the Real Presence now, the glory and happiness of heaven afterward, would never be ours.

These should be our thoughts when we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament; try to bring them home to our own selves. Say to Jesus in His Real Presence: "Dear Lord, once You bore a bitter, heavy cross for me, a cross that I have made heavier by the addition of my own sins. The same love that brought You to the cross brought You here and keeps You here on this altar, Your love for me."

"I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" (Ps. 84:9). Jesus will speak to us. He will tell us what He wishes, what He expects of us. He wishes us to keep Him company in His Real Presence as often as we can. If He wishes to be with us, will we not wish to be with Him? He sees so many

who refuse His company and His cross, and He looks to us to comfort Him.

SIMON HELPS JESUS

Matthew and Mark tell us that the soldiers forced Simon to take up the cross of Christ. Luke says: "They laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene . . . and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus" (Luke 23:26). We can well believe that what Simon did first by compulsion he continued by God's grace to do willingly. How great a privilege, to carry the cross of Christ for Him and with Him, to lessen the physical burden on the wounded shoulders of the God-man!

Some think that they would be glad to have the privilege that was Simon's. But would they? The cross was heavy, the way was hard and rough, there was no friendly eye or voice or hand to comfort or help. Would we? Behold the answer. Share now the cross of Christ, our sorrows and sufferings, not repining, not rebelling, but willingly, for His sake.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus sees those who would have been with the angry mob around Him on His way to Calvary. They are those who even now hate Him and His followers. "For many walk, of whom I have told you . . . that they are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). He sees souls whose love for Him is weak, who are afraid of the cross. They were not with Him on His journey to Calvary; they are not with Him now when He calls them to share the cross that once was His.

Jesus, make me strong in faith and love. In faith, to believe that "the disciple is not above his Master" (Luke 6:40). In love, to be able to say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

VERONICA COMFORTS JESUS

An ancient tradition tells us that when Jesus was carrying His cross Veronica offered Him a linen cloth to wipe from His face the sweat and dust and blood. He accepted this comfort from her, and when He returned to her the cloth, on it was pictured His sacred face. The Roman law forbade

any act of pity or help to a prisoner on his way to death. But love is stronger than fear, and Veronica's heroic act is an example for all time.

God's mercy gives us many opportunities to comfort Him even now. We may not have the courage of Veronica, but we can give help and hope and comfort to the weak, the sorrowing, and the suffering. Jesus said: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). Have we often done this for Him?

In the Blessed Sacrament we can comfort Jesus in many ways: by our own faith and love and service, and by bringing others to know and love and serve Him in His Real Presence. Do we often speak to others of the privilege, the grace that is ours in possessing Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? No grace is given save to share. Do we selfishly keep this gift to ourselves, or do we seek to share it with others?

Jesus suffered and died for all. He is present in the Blessed Sacrament to welcome and to bless all who come to Him. But there are many who do not know that He is here; there are those who know but do not care. Ours is the duty to pray for them, to encourage and to help them come: "Refrain not to speak in the time of salvation" (Ecclus. 4:28).

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus chose the most painful death that could be suffered, to show how far His love for us could carry Him, to show that there was nothing He would not endure to gain our love. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Greater love than this the God-man had, for He suffered three long hours until death came to release Him from a pain worse than death.

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). How few are willing to do this! Many are willing to follow Him to the Transfiguration on Thabor, but not to Calvary. But it was on Calvary that He redeemed the world; it is on Calvary that we partake of the Redemption, for "we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3).

Look intently at the Sacred Host, and know that This

is He Who once hung upon the cross. Thy wounds I cannot see as Thomas did. On the cross Thy divinity was hidden, but here Thy divinity and humanity both are hidden. But, "I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23); "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Adore Him, love Him, thank Him for the mercy and the love that keep Him on the altar here as once they kept Him on the cross.

Both on the cross and in the Blessed Sacrament Jesus is the God of all power and might. Yet on the cross He cannot move hand or foot. In the Blessed Sacrament the Sacred Host moves not unless the priest moves It. He is kept here by His own words: "This is My Body." So helpless does Jesus seem in the Real Presence. And this for love of us. Will we not repay love for love?

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

In the midst of His awful pain, whilst the executioners were driving the nails through His hands and feet, Jesus prayed. Have we ever tried to pray in the midst of great suffering? When we felt that we could bear no more did we rally all the powers of our souls, and force our minds and wills to think of God, to speak to Him? It is hard, but Jesus did it.

Jesus prayed for His executioners, for Pilate, for the priests, scribes, and Pharisees who had cried out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him." He prayed for all who have sinned. He was praying for us. We find it hard to forgive those who offend us. Are we better than Christ? Why, then, will not we say what He said: "Father, forgive them"? How can we, who have so much need of forgiveness, refuse to forgive?

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus bears so patiently with the unbelief of many, the indifference of others, the insults and irreverence of some. Again, as on Calvary, He prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Why don't they know; why don't they try to know? Alas; "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. 12:11).

When we are before the Real Presence be careful that

no least irreverence creep into our thoughts or words or conduct, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5); "The Lord is in His holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Hab. 2:20). Let our prayers of faith and love rise as incense before the Blessed Sacrament. Ask Him to forgive the least irreverence or neglect of which we may have been guilty. Pray for those for whom He prayed: "Father, forgive them." Pray for grace to follow His example.

COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Jesus is raised up on the cross, and hangs in bitter suffering and desolation. From the surging mob around, from the soldiers, from the priests and scribes came the cry of derision: "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him" (Matt. 27:40, 42).

In all subsequent centuries that same cry has been repeated by those who are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts" (Eph. 4:18), "who have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not" (Jer. 5:21). If Jesus had come down from the cross many probably would not have believed in Him. And so it is today, because, as our blessed Lord Himself tells us, "Men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil" (John 3:19).

"I will espouse thee to Me in faith" (Osee 2:20). Does not our blessed Saviour in the Real Presence speak these words to us? Will we not, then, humbly, gratefully offer Him our faith for those who do not believe, our love for those who love Him not? We do not ask Him to lift the veil that conceals His presence, but we pray that He remove the veil from the hearts of those who believe not nor love.

Dear Jesus, Thou didst bear so patiently the bitter taunts of those who derided Thee in Thy dying agony. Bear with the poverty of my service, with the poor evidence that I have given of my faith in the Real Presence, of my love for Thee, my Eucharistic God. Give me more faith, greater

love. Grant that my faith and love may help to bring others to believe and to love.

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46.) No mind of man can picture the desolation, the loneliness that flooded the soul of Jesus when His Father seemed to have forsaken Him, to have left Him hanging between heaven and earth, bereft of all consolation. His sacred Heart, that loved so much and yearned for love, seemed drained of everything save the presence of suffering and sin, His own suffering and our sins.

Have we not felt the hurt from the desertion of a friend who failed us in our hour of need? Have we not felt sometimes as if God Himself had abandoned us, had left us to suffer alone, and withdrew His consolations from us? Jesus suffered His awful abandonment to atone for the sins of those who deserted Him, and to give us courage to bear our little share in only a shadow of His fearful trial.

In the Real Presence we have the same blessed Saviour Who suffered this awful torment on the cross. When God tries our souls and we feel abandoned by all, even by Him Who is love itself, when the dark night of the soul falls heavily upon us, then come to Him in His Real Presence. Come to Him as one “crying in the night, crying for the light,” for He is our light and life.

“As one whom the mother caresseth so will I comfort you” (Isa. 66:13). “I, I Myself will comfort you” (Isa. 51:12). Realize the treasure we have in the Real Presence of the divine Comforter. He is here “to comfort all that mourn” (Isa. 61:2). He knows the sorrow of a soul that seems abandoned, desolate, alone. He bore that sorrow in a way and to a degree beyond all that man has ever borne. Will we not trust Him Who knows and cares?

1 THIRST

Jesus' agony on the cross was increased by the fire of a thirst so excessive that it forced from His parched lips the pitiful cry, “I thirst.” How did they assuage His thirst?

"And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth" (John 19:28, 29). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Scripture, "In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. 68:22).

Jesus thirsted on the cross not only in body but in soul, the thirst of a mighty love for men, of a burning desire for their salvation. Has He not proved the greatness of that love? "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Isa. 5:4.) And how have sinners repaid Him? They made a mockery of His love for them, of His desire for their salvation. In His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink.

In the Real Presence Jesus bears not the torment of His thirst on the cross, but He bears the same love for souls, the same desire for their salvation. He loves as only God can love, with an infinite love that stops at nothing, a love that overflows from His sacred Heart to fill ours. If anything could make Him suffer now, man's ingratitude would be more painful to Him than all else that He endured in His passion.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is saying to us: "Console Me; for I look to you to treasure in your hearts the love that others reject and despise, to give Me your hearts for I have given you Mine." Yes, dear Jesus, I wish to love Thee more and more, to console Thee for those who love Thee not. O heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, burning with love for us, inflame our hearts with love for Thee.

IT IS CONSUMMATED

Not until the chalice had been drained to the dregs, not until there was no more to be suffered did Jesus say, "It is consummated," did He permit Himself to die. "What is there that I ought to do to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Isa. 5:4.) He lived, labored, suffered, He gave up everything, "He emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:7) for us; and, when there was no more to give, He died for us.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). These words Jesus spoke to the Father in His last discourse to His

Apostles. These words we also should be able to say humbly yet trustingly. Jesus persevered until the end; and we, His followers, must persevere until the end in the work that He has given us to do, the work of saving our souls. Jesus has done His part; are we doing ours?

Jesus remains in the Blessed Sacrament day and night, year after year, and will remain until the end of the world. His work in the Real Presence is not yet finished, and will not be, so long as there remains one soul that needs His help and comfort. When the last grace is given, when the last soul is saved, when time shall be no more, only then will Jesus say what He said on the cross: "It is consummated." His work is done.

Will we not be faithful to Him Who is so faithful to us? He is waiting for us; do not keep Him waiting long. There is so much to tell Him, so much to receive from Him. O Jesus, Thou art never weary of Thy vigil for souls. Watch, Sacramental Sentinel, watch for the weary world, for the erring soul, and for Thy poor and lonely children.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

"In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). The God-man accepted the humiliation, the helplessness of death. His human nature shrunk before this awful thing. "Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour" (John 12:27). Yes, He came into the world to die, to die for us. "And, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

"Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, for He hath given His life for thee" (Ecclus. 29:19). He Who hung dead on the cross died for us, and we owe to His death our eternal lives. "Being consummated, He became to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation" (Hebr. 5:9). Have we ever forgotten the kindness of our Surety? Because He died for us the least we can do is to live for Him.

In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus is before us, in all external appearance, as one utterly bereft of power, motion, life. He is the God-man Who once hung upon the cross truly dead.

Was it not enough that He should endure the humiliation and helplessness of death to accomplish the Redemption? Why then in the Real Presence does He clothe Himself in this outward appearance so like to that of death? "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12:32). This He said of His death on the cross; this He could also say of His Real Presence on the altar.

Dear Jesus, on the cross and on the altar Thou hast drawn me to Thee. Keep me ever close to Thee in faith and love; never let me leave Thee, nor grow tepid or cold. Let me ever love Thee more and more.

JESUS IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS

When Jesus hung upon the cross in His agony Mary could not take Him in her arms to assuage His bitter pain, she could not bind up His wounds or cool His fevered brow. His dead body, however, was taken down from the cross and laid in her arms. She looked upon His wounds, upon His face livid, distorted, and mired with dust and blood and sweat. She kissed His wounds, and with anguished heart prepared His body for its burial.

Have we, by our tears of deep and true contrition, washed the wounds of Jesus and bound them up? Remember, these wounds were caused by our grievous sins. If these sins remain it is as though the wounds of Jesus are bleeding and gaping still. If our hearts are of flesh and blood and not of stone we will share in Mary's grief, and by our sorrowing love bind up the wounds of Jesus.

In the Real Presence Jesus' wounds are no longer grievous to behold. Rather, they add to the beauty and splendor of His glorified body, for they are the shining evidence of His great love for us. Nevertheless, He sees in some souls the presence of grievous sin, the cause of His wounds. His pitying love goes out to these souls, and He calls them to repentance: "Turn ye to Me . . . and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zach. 1:3).

We cannot clasp in our arms the Eucharistic body of Jesus as Mary enfolded in her embrace the dead body of her

Son; but we can take Him to our hearts. It is as though, by our tears of contrition now, we helped Mary then to wash His wounds; as though, by our love and devotion to Jesus in the Real Presence, we helped His mother to bind up His wounds.

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

He died, and was buried. What is there that Jesus has not done for us, that He has not endured for us? He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross. And now He lies in the darkness and silence of the tomb. He shares the common fate of man; He died, and was buried. What a mystery is here; the lifeless body of Jesus lying still and helpless in the tomb, and He is God!

To what greater depths of humiliation could Jesus descend? "But man, when he shall be dead, and stripped, and consumed, I pray you, where is he? As if the waters should depart out of the sea, and an emptied river should be dried up" (Job 14:10, 11). Behold Jesus in the tomb, and we will see the depths of humiliation of which only an infinite, a divine love is capable. And this Jesus endured for us.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and Jesus in the tomb. Is there not here a similarity in outward appearance? Is He not in the Real Presence, as it were, buried under external appearances of bread? So far as our senses can perceive He is motionless, silent, powerless, even as His body actually was in the tomb. Jesus accepts these external appearances because in the Blessed Sacrament is the same love that brought Him once to the tomb, and, were it necessary, would do so again.

"For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). We must be dead to all that would keep us from Jesus. How then can we let the least excuse keep us from Him in His Real Presence? Do we bring others to Him, to share our grace and privilege? Do we strive earnestly to extend the kingdom of our Sacramental Saviour? Can we truly say, "We also believe, for which cause we speak also" (2 Cor. 4:13)?

DEVOTION TO THE REAL PRESENCE

DEVOTION OF THE FORTY HOURS

WHEN people high in position or attainments hold public receptions many attend, feeling honored by the invitation extended to them. Once a year in every Catholic parish God Himself holds a public reception for three days, inviting all who wish to come. He is present to receive and welcome those who come to offer Him the homage of their faith and love and service. In return He enriches them with gifts exceeding in value all the gifts of men.

The Forty Hours' Devotion is a reception to which our Eucharistic God invites us, to pay Him our homage and to receive His graces. We come to praise and thank Him in His Real Presence, to be filled with the good things of the Lord, to drink from this Fountain of grace. "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28). Pour out our souls to Him. Now is the time to talk to Him, to listen to Him: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas, I am dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27); "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me, for He will speak peace unto His people" (Ps. 84:9).

We have much to say to Jesus, and we have something to give to Him. Ask Him to accept our faith and love and grateful devotion. Ask Him to accept them in atonement for our failures to measure up to the standard He set for us, and to atone for those who give Him no love or service. Come to Him each day of the Forty Hours; get others to come, to share the privilege that is ours.

BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

We would like to have been one of the little children who clustered about Jesus, of whom the Scripture tells us: "Laying His hands upon them, He blessed them" (Mark

10:16). It is good to have the blessing of God, for, "in a swift hour His blessing beareth fruit" (Ecclus. 11:24). Truly is he blessed and happy whom God blesses. Who, then, will not seek and gladly receive the blessing of the great God Himself? "In the blessing of God I also have hoped" (Ecclus. 33:17), and my highest hopes have been realized, for, "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich" (Prov. 10:22).

"And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). We have not far to go to find Him, for He is in our very midst, on our altars: "Great is He That is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 12:6). In the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament we receive the blessing of our God as truly as did the little children who gathered around Him in the days of old. When the Sacred Host in the monstrance is raised over us in blessing we know by the certainty of our faith that, "Thy blessing is upon Thy people" (Ps. 3:9).

We all need God's blessing, and need it very much. Unless God bless our work it will be fruitless, unless His blessing guard and protect us we shall fall; for, "Vain is the help of man" (Ps. 107:13), and, "Unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it" (Ps. 126:1). Help, grace, and support come to us in abundant measure from the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Many do not realize this or little appreciate this precious gift of God to His children. Do we show our appreciation by seeking this blessing often? Are we present at Benediction at least every Sunday, even on other occasions?

A VISIT TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

We spend a certain amount of time visiting our friends. How much time do we spend visiting our best Friend, our Eucharistic God? Do we pass by the door of the church, where He is waiting for us, without even a thought of Him? Is this the way to treat our best Friend? "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). If only we knew how good it is to be with God, to be so close to Him! Though we see Him not nor hear His voice, He is here, for He said: "This is My body."

“Is it credible, then, that God should dwell with men on the earth?” (2 Par. 6:18.) Yes, because He is God, and loves us as only God can love: “My delights were to be with the children of men” (Prov. 8:31). Therefore He bids us come to Him in His Eucharistic Presence; He wishes to have us close to Him now, even as He wishes to have us close to Him afterward in heaven. And we will come to Him gladly, gratefully, often. Happy moments spent with God, moments rich in grace and merit, moments when God speaks to us, and we to Him.

In the earlier centuries of the Church the Christians were more strongly imbued with the spirit of awe and reverence for the actual presence of the great God in the Blessed Sacrament. “The Lord is in His holy Temple; let all earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. 2:20). We need more of this spirit of awe and reverence. We need more love for our Eucharistic Guest, more desire for Him. Love feeds on love. The oftener we come to Him the more we will wish to come. Thank God for the gift of the Real Presence, and make good use of the precious Treasure that is ours.

PART II

HOLY COMMUNION

GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

GOD IS CHARITY

A FATHOMLESS ocean, a shoreless sea, and on its endless reaches rides a tiny vessel. This is the ocean of God's love, and the vessel is a human being. No mind of angel or man can fathom the depths of that love, can measure its length or its breadth. It is infinite, it is divine; for, "God is charity." Overflowing from its infinite depths, the charity of God reached the hearts of men and filled them: "And we have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us" (1 John 4:16).

We have proof of this divine love: "For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son" (John 3:16); "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). It was not enough that He made us, gave us the wondrous gifts of nature; that He redeemed us and paid the penalty for our sins, thus restoring to us the gifts of the soul lost by sin, but His love went further, for it knew no bounds, and He gave us Himself. What more could He give, what more could He do? Truly this is an infinite love.

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). Yes, He loved us unto the end of His earthly life, and far beyond. He desired to eat this pasch because He was about to give us the greatest of all gifts, Himself in Holy Communion. The more we think of such a love the greater our wonder grows. "What is a man that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?"

(Job 7:17.) It is because He is God, and “God is charity” (1 John 4:16).

CREATION PROCLAIMS GOD’S LOVE

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). God’s infinite love is self-sufficient. He had no need to spend His love upon aught less than Himself; He did not need to love creatures. But He wishes to share His love with others; and so He created the universe, then He made man. Creation was an act of infinite condescension on the part of God, Who needed nothing outside of Himself. His love, like an overflowing spring, watered the universe, giving life, beauty, and power. And all things sang a hymn of praise to Him Who made them and loved them: “For Thou didst not appoint or make any thing hating it” (Wisd. 11:25).

Of all creation under heaven the masterpiece is man, made to God’s own image and likeness. Upon him God poured out in greater measure the flood of His divine love, and gave to him understanding and free will to know and to accept this priceless gift of love. “Lord, what is man, that Thou art made known to him? or the Son of man, that Thou makest account of him?” (Ps. 143:3.) If all lesser creation proclaims God’s love, how much more is man a living, constant evidence of the outpouring of a divine, infinite love?

“Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Ps. 8:6). The greatest glory and honor that man can have is to be loved by God, to be able to say: “Thou art the God of my heart, and the God That is my portion for ever” (Ps. 72:26). With all our hearts we should thank God Who made us that He might love us, Who said: “I have . . . called thee by thy name; thou art Mine” (Isa. 43:1). Are we not glad and grateful that “we are His workmanship” (Eph. 2:10), made to be the objects of the love of the great God?

THE IMAGE OF GOD

“And every one that calleth upon My name, I have created him for My glory” (Isa. 43:7). The tiny mote of dust floating in the air is invisible until the sunlight touches

it and gives to it something of its brightness. So too the souls of men, when they are touched by the light of God's love, take on life and beauty. Only when God breathed upon the lifeless body of Adam did he become a living soul. Only when God's love clothes a soul does that soul really begin to live.

God not only created us, He gave us a share in His goodness, truth, and beauty. And this because He made us for Himself, for His glory, to be in a finite way and degree some reflection of His goodness and His beauty: "And God created man to His own image" (Gen. 1:27). We are living pictures of God's infinite love. No picture equals the original. The prism does not reflect the full measure of the brilliance and beauty of the sun. So our finite being can contain and show forth God's infinite love only in the limited manner and measure of our own finite nature.

Made for the glory of God, made to proclaim, to show forth by our very being God's infinite love, what a glorious destiny is ours! "Hath not the Lord made the saints to declare all His wonderful works?" (Ecclus. 42:17.) And the most wonderful of His works under heaven is man, a constant reminder, a living reflection of the infinite love of the divine Creator; man, whom St. Paul calls, "the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7). Mindful of our great dignity and privilege, "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Do my works glorify my Father in heaven?

THEREFORE HAVE I DRAWN THEE

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). Iron is drawn to the magnet, the flower turns to the sun, falling bodies are drawn to the earth by the law of gravity. If this force exists in nature, shall we not find it in the God of nature? "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. 16:4). All nature less than man obeys this force unflinchingly. "By Thy ordinance the day goeth on, for all things serve Thee" (Ps. 118:91). "The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced;

. . . and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him That made them" (Bar. 3:34, 35).

Man, so far excelling the lesser creation, is the more strongly drawn to his creator, as his powers and faculties are more keenly attuned to the divine attraction. St. Augustine well expresses the strength of this attraction: "O God, Thou hast made our hearts for Thee, and they cannot rest until they rest in Thee." Many of little or no faith feel, at least at times, this attraction, this drawing of their souls to God. They feel the littleness of the things of the world, the futility of efforts that bring only worldly recompense. "What hath a man more of all his labors that he taketh under the sun? . . . Behold, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. 1:3, 14).

How much more do they feel the divine attraction who have been richly endowed with God's grace, who open their hearts to its strong but gentle influence? "For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" (Ps. 62:2.) "For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away" (Ps. 72:26). Behold God's answer to this cry: "I will draw them . . . with the bands of love" (Osee 11:4). "Fear not, for I have . . . called thee by thy name: thou art Mine" (Isa. 43:1). Am I glad to be His?

UNION WITH GOD

God loves us with a love only He possesses. He is drawing us strong but gentle to Him by the bands of His love. The divine Lover wishes to unite to Him that which He loves. God's purpose in drawing us is really to unite us to Him in some mysterious way, accomplished partially on earth and perfectly in heaven. God wishes the finite to come to the Infinite, the creature to be united to the Creator, man to have a share of some kind in the divine. Only God could descend so much.

The union of man with God finds its perfect fruition only in heaven. There the soul that on earth freely responded to the divine attraction now sees God: "But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). "We

shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (i John 3:2). In the light of the divine presence the souls in heaven, in some finite way and degree, are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). As fire permeates the iron, so the glory of the Beatific Vision fills their whole being.

To prepare us for this perfect union, to comfort and strengthen and help us in our waiting for it, God gives to us on earth some measure of union with Him; even a great measure in the union of Holy Communion. It is as though He were unwilling to wait until the light of heaven dawned upon us, and so He brought down to our poor level of life on earth the very light of heaven, He Himself came to us. Yes, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). He is calling me in Holy Communion. Do I wish to have Him?

UNION WITH GOD IN HEAVEN

"Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory" (John 17:24). The complete answer to this prayer of Jesus for His Apostles and for us is found only in the Beatific Vision in heaven. There the elect in a finite way see God as He is; they love Him and they possess Him. This is the essential happiness of heaven; this is the fullest measure in which man can be united to God. "That they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21).

Seeing God as He is, the blessed in heaven are filled with an incomparable happiness. They see in Him all that makes for perfect happiness; life, light, beauty, and knowledge. Now, as never on earth, the eye is filled with seeing, the ear with hearing, the heart with loving.

"My Beloved to me, and I to Him" (Cant. 2:16). At last the heart is at rest in perfect love; God's love for us that fills our soul to overflowing, our love for Him that now is full and complete. Immersed in the infinite ocean of divine love, we have no thought nor desire, no interest nor care that is not in perfect accord with this love, the most perfect union that the finite can have with the Infinite.

The blessed in heaven not only see God and love Him

with a perfect love, they possess Him. Love begets desire. In heaven love receives the complete fulfillment of its desire. "I found Him Whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. 3:4). The finite possessing the Infinite. We must wait until we reach heaven to understand the mystery of love herein contained. If we give ourselves to God now, God will give Himself to us then.

UNION WITH GOD ON EARTH

So great is God's mercy, so great is His love for us that He gives to His children in their exile on earth some foretaste of heaven. He wishes to draw us and to keep us close to Him in our earthly life. And so, because we cannot come to Him, He comes to us. "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (John 14:18). This He does by the operation of divine grace, that unites us to Him as the branch is united to the vine by the life-giving sap that flows from the trunk to its branches.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you the branches" (John 15:4, 5). This is the picture that Jesus gives us of the union between Him and the soul of man on earth. This union gives to the soul a new and higher life, the supernatural, lost by the sin of Adam, restored by the Redemption, applied to the soul by grace.

"I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This life that Jesus came to give us is supernatural life, the life of union with Him now on earth and afterward in heaven. This is the life of which St. John says: "And this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life" (1 John 5:11, 12). This is the life of which St. Paul tells us: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Do we desire this life? Do we desire to live united to Christ? We must live, then, as befits one whose "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). We must live as He would have us live.

UNION WITH GOD BY GRACE

“You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour’s fountains” (Isa. 12:3). God wishes all to be saved. He “gave Himself a redemption for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). He is “the Saviour of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10). All having the use of reason will receive from God sufficient grace to secure their eternal salvation. God has at His disposal many ways and means of effecting this. Sinners, heathens, unbelievers, those sunk in the depths of paganism, all are within the reach of God’s mercy, of His saving grace. “But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things” (Wisd. 11:24).

God has instituted certain means or channels through which ordinarily He conveys His grace to us, by which we are united to Him or the union already effected is drawn closer still. There are the seven sacraments. Baptism clothes the soul with supernatural life for the first time, and unites that soul to God by sanctifying grace. By the commission of mortal sin man turns away from God, the union is broken and supernatural life is gone. The sacrament of penance restores lost grace, and the union of the repentant soul with God is renewed. The other sacraments increase sanctifying grace in the souls of the just, thus bringing closer their union with God.

“This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes” (Ps. 117:23). Wonderful as are God’s works in the material world, more wonderful yet are they in the spiritual world. The grace of God has a power exceeding anything of the material order. It raises man to the heights of the supernatural, makes him an heir of heaven, a child of God by adoption. By a mysterious yet real union grace unites man to God. Have I thanked Him for this gift? Have I tried to realize something of the greatness of this gift of union with God by grace?

HE GAVE US HIMSELF

Was it not enough that the Son of God “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant . . . and in habit found as a man” (Phil. 2:7)? The infinite God assumed the nature of

a finite being: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). And this for love of us. Was it not enough that the God-man suffered the awful things of His passion and death to pay the penalty of our sins, that by His death we might live? "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16).

Jesus thought it not enough. He was not content to dwell amongst us for only thirty-three years. He thought it not enough to dwell in our souls by His spiritual presence only. And so His wisdom and His love devised a means by which He would dwell with us both in His divine and in His human nature. He instituted the Holy Eucharist, and abides in our midst, body and soul, humanity and divinity under the lowly appearance of bread, to be our Guest for all time in the Real Presence. "He That made me rested in my tabernacle" (Ecclus. 24:12).

Even this was not enough to satisfy the heart of the God-man burning with the flame of an infinite love for His children on earth. And so He gave us Himself, to be the nourishment of our bodies and souls. "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:56). He gave us Holy Communion, the closest union man can have with God in this world; Holy Communion, the gift of Himself, and with Him of all graces and blessings. "How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) The "bread of angels" becomes the bread of man.

GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

Are we not God's spoiled children? Spoiled in the sense that we have received so much from Him, our life has been so filled with His mercies that we take them as a matter of course, and fail to recognize our own utter unworthiness. "Who am I, O Lord God . . . that Thou shouldst give such things to me?" (1 Par. 17:16.) "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10). If we are not blind we will acknowledge in all humility and grateful love: "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing" (Ps. 22:1). "The Lord hath done great things for us" (Ps. 125:3).

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. 19:9). Blessed indeed are they who are called to the feast of Holy Communion, to receive into their bodies and souls the Lamb of God. Of all the gifts that God could give, the greatest and the best is the gift of Himself. "Forty years didst Thou feed them [the Hebrews] in the desert, and nothing was wanting to them" (2 Esdras 9:21). All our lifelong He has fed us with heavenly manna, His own most precious body and blood, and nothing was wanting to us. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

The Creator gives Himself to His creature. He Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain now, hidden under the appearance of bread, takes up His dwelling in the hearts and souls of His children. O divine condescension, O Gift of all gifts, how can we thank You as gratefully as we ought, how can we receive You as worthily as we should? How can we give fitting welcome to the divine Guest Who has come into our hearts? Words fail us; this only can we say: "My Lord and my God, I adore Thee, I love Thee, I thank Thee, with all my soul."

HOLY COMMUNION

WHAT IS HOLY COMMUNION?

“FOR EVER, O Lord, Thy word standeth firm in heaven; Thy truth unto all generations” (Ps. 118:89, 90). Only by the revelation of God can we know what Holy Communion is. It so transcends any natural experience, anything that the senses can tell us, that never would it have entered into the mind of man to conceive it, had not God revealed it. Our knowledge of Holy Communion rests entirely upon what God has said of it as given us in Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of His infallible Church. It is known solely by faith. “O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep” (Ps. 91:6).

“The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?” (1 Cor. 10:16.) At the Last Supper Jesus gave to His Apostles and their successors the power to change bread and wine into His own body and blood, just as He had done. The reception of this divine nourishment is Holy Communion. The Sacred Host that is placed upon our tongues is the living, glorified body of our incarnate God. Jesus gives Himself to us.

In Holy Communion our blessed Lord comes to us under the external appearance of food: “For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:56). “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh” (John 6:52). God chose to come to us under this form to be the food of our souls, to give life and strength to the soul as food gives life and strength to the body. Be wise; heed God’s grace calling us to His feast: “Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you” (Prov. 9:5).

THE MYSTERY OF HOLY COMMUNION

"For many things are shewn to thee above the understanding of men" (Ecclus. 3:25). How can we speak fittingly of Holy Communion? How can the mind of man conceive or picture the ineffable mystery of God's love uniting Himself to us by a real union? This union is not only by grace and His spiritual presence but by the actual giving of Himself to us, uniting us to Him. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:57).

We cannot penetrate the depths of this mystery; but some little of its wondrous nature God has made known to us. He wishes us to think often and deeply of the mystery of Holy Communion, that we may know better His infinite love for us. The Incarnation, the Redemption, the passion and death of the blessed Saviour, real as they are, ever old are yet ever new; but the gift of Holy Communion is at our very hand, present before us now and here. "Great is He That is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 12:6).

"We cannot find Him worthily" (Job 37:23). So holy and so great is the subject of these meditations, Holy Communion, that we must keep in mind God's word: "Put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:44). We must free our minds and hearts from the thought and love of earthly things. We must fill our minds and hearts with the thought and love of the subject that now engages us, Holy Communion. For this is the mystery of God's love for us, a love so great that it brought Him down to our poor level, brought Him into our bodies and souls in the closest union man can have with God on earth.

MY LORD AND MY GOD

In all these meditations we should keep foremost in our minds that He Who comes to us in Holy Communion is God. He Who said, "The bread that I will give is My flesh" (John 6:52), is He of Whom St. John said, "In the beginning

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). This is He Who said, "Before Abraham was made, I am" (John 8:58). This is He before Whom Thomas bent low in adoration as from his trembling lips came the words, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

From the first moment of the Incarnation the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was united to a living body and soul, never to be separated from them again. The little Babe of Bethlehem, trembling in the chill of the first Christmas night, is almighty God. The Boy of Nazareth, subject to Mary and Joseph, is the great God Himself. The Teacher and Healer of Israel, the Source of all knowledge and wisdom, Who went about doing good; the Man hanging on the cross of Calvary, quivering in bitterest agony of body and soul, dying, dead, is almighty God. And This is He who comes to us in Holy Communion. "My Lord and my God."

Look upon the Sacred Host before It is placed upon our tongue; look upon It in reverent awe, in adoration, and know that we are looking upon our God. What matters it that we do not see the glory of His divinity or even the beauty of His humanity? In His incarnate life the former was hidden, here both are concealed. But what of it? Is not His word sufficient: "This is My body"? Then let our willing, eager, fervent answers be, "My Lord and my God."

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

"For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us; . . . and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). "For while all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty Word leapt down from heaven, from Thy royal throne" (Wisd. 18:14, 15).

Behold how the Son of God came on earth. "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). Born in a

stable, cradled in a manger. And, "This is our God, and there shall no other be accounted of in comparison of Him" (Bar. 3:36). Born in a stable. That stable, bleak and barren before, is not bleak and barren now, for within its walls budded the fairest flower earth or heaven could know. This is the answer to the prophet's prayer: "Let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour" (Isa. 45:8).

Look intently upon the Sacred Host that soon will be ours. We are looking upon the little Babe of Bethlehem, from Whose hands, once weak and tiny, hangs the life of the universe. The shepherds who came and adored could not see the glory of His divinity, hidden even from Mary and Joseph. The sacramental veil conceals from us even His humanity.

We have received Him. Our bodies and souls now cradle the Babe of Bethlehem. Our souls, like the stable of Bethlehem, may once have been bleak and barren; but now they are rich and beautiful beyond compare, for God is there. And, "In Me is all grace of the way and of the truth" (Ecclus. 24:25).

THE CHILD OF NAZARETH

"Can any thing of good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46.) This question of Nathaniel shows how inconsequential was this obscure village hidden in the hills of Galilee. Yet the Son of God chose this village as His home for thirty years. "The base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen" (1 Cor. 1:28). He did not choose the great capitols of the world, nor even the holy city of Jerusalem, but in the poorest of the poor He took up His abode. And in doing this He made the little house at Nazareth the richest home in all the world.

Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was God, knew the Treasure it was their privilege to guard and care for. J'hey saw nothing of the splendor of His divinity, so completely had He hidden it under His humanity. They adored Him with fullness of faith, with perfect love, the while the divine Child served them in humility and obedience. He "was subject to them" (Luke 2:51). What thoughts were in their

minds as He "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" (Luke 2:52)? What thoughts would we have if we saw the Child of Nazareth, the Son of God, poor, humble, and obedient?

This same Child of Nazareth we are about to receive in Holy Communion. He is the God of all power and riches; and He comes to make our hearts His home. "Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it" (Ps. 131:14). The little house of Nazareth was poor, but it was clean. Our hearts must be clean, pure, and holy, for, "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord" (Ps. 92:5). Ask Mary and Joseph to help us welcome Him to the home of our hearts with something of their faith and love, their purity and holiness.

IN THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW

There was no idleness in the little home at Nazareth. Mary worked, caring for the home and the needs of its occupants, Joseph supported the family by the labor of his hands as a carpenter. Jesus, when He had attained sufficient age, worked to help Mary and Joseph. The Son of God labored in the sweat of His brow, labored as a carpenter's assistant. After Joseph's death He took up the trade of His foster father, supporting His mother and Himself by the work of His hands: "Is not this the Carpenter?" (Mark 6:3.)

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). What a terrible reversal of position is this! He Who pronounced this sentence upon guilty Adam now Himself submits to that sentence. He Who by an act of His omnipotent will fashioned all things now labors with His hands in the sweat of His brow, in effort and fatigue to fashion a plowshare, a piece of furniture, a cottage, or a stable. Then, "He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created" (Ps. 32:9). Now He submits to the decree: "Man shall go forth to his work and to his labour until the evening" (Ps. 103:23).

We should think of this while we prepare for Holy Communion. We are about to welcome into our hearts the Carpenter of Nazareth, the God of all creation. What shall we say to Him? Shall we complain that our lot is hard, our

burdens heavy, our labors too wearying? How can we tell Him that when we think of His hard lot, His heavy burdens, His wearying labors? Shall we not tell Him, rather, that with all our hearts we thank Him for the example He gave us? Tell Him how gratefully, willingly we will work for Him Who worked for us.

HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD

Jesus' ministry amongst men, of His life and work as He went about doing good, is the fulfillment of the words of the prophet: "Behold, I will close their wounds and give them health, and I will cure them" (Jer. 33:6). Look at the picture: "And they presented to Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and those that had the palsy, and He cured them" (Matt. 4:24). He went about curing sickness of body and of soul, restoring life lost in body and in soul.

A few days before His death Jesus said: "Father . . . I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:1, 4). All that the blessed Saviour did had this purpose, to glorify His Father in the harvest of souls redeemed, sanctified, and made fit for heaven. Jesus' ministry continues still; of this we are not only a witness but a beneficiary. Again He goes about doing good to body and soul. He comes to us in Holy Communion, and brings with Him increase of spiritual health, strength, and life.

"For He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things" (Ps. 106:9). Only in heaven will we know the miracles of grace that God has worked in our souls in Holy Communion. As His very presence brought hope and happiness in the days of old, so now He brings hope and happiness to the faithful soul that loves and welcomes Him; He brings a breath of heaven in the midst of earth. Holy Communion brings God into our bodies and souls, and where God is there is peace, for "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). "And great shall be the peace of Thy children" (Isa. 54:13).

THOU HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE

"Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The word of God is our life; our health and strength both of body and soul: "Thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things. . . . Thy word preserveth them that believe in Thee" (Wisd. 16:12, 26). This is the word that Jesus spoke when He taught "as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 7:29). This is the word of which St. Peter said: "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:69).

Would we like to have been among those privileged to listen to Jesus as He spoke the words of wondrous wisdom, compassion, and love that compelled the admiration of all that heard them? "The people were in admiration at His doctrine" (Matt. 7:28). Would we like to have been in the synagogue at Capharnaum and to have heard the words He spoke, words that man had never heard before? "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:51, 52).

In Holy Communion we receive Him Who spoke these words. He is with us; in us as really as He was before those who heard Him and saw Him. We cannot see Him or hear Him as they did; but we can see Him with the eyes of faith and our souls can hear Him if we but listen attentively: "Behold, my Beloved speaketh to me" (Cant. 2:10). Yes, He will speak to us. "Hear, O My people, and I will speak" (Ps. 49:7). "He will speak peace unto His people" (Ps. 84:9). He will speak to us words of comfort and strength, of light and life: "Thy word was to me a joy and gladness of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

THEY HAVE HATED ME WITHOUT CAUSE

Listen to the sad plaint of our blessed Saviour as prophesied of Him by David: "They have compassed Me about with words of hatred. . . . And they repaid Me evil for good, and hatred for My love" (Ps. 108:3, 5). "They hated me without cause" (John 15:25). Bitter and relentless was the hatred,

especially of many of the priests and scribes and Pharisees, who dogged the steps of Jesus throughout His public ministry. Deep was the hurt, the sorrow of the gentle Saviour's heart wounded by those who, of all others, should have loved Him most. "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people?" (Deut. 32:6.)

Strange and fearful to imagine the hatred that some bear against God's most precious gift to man, Holy Communion. There are those who have sacrilegiously profaned and desecrated the most Sacred Host. There are those who, like the Jews of old in the desert, cry out: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food" (Num. 21:5). There are those who, knowing at least something of what they do, receive our Lord in their body when their soul is stained with mortal sin. As though they would bring God and sin together.

What is our duty in the face of these facts? We know what our duty is if we really love Jesus, if we believe His word, "This is My body." We are the bodyguards of our Eucharistic King; and ours is the duty to protect Him from insult, profanation, and sacrilegious disrespect. Ours is the duty to redouble our love, ardor, zeal in our Communions. We should receive Him as often as we can, to atone for those who know but do not care, who will not come to Him. Make our lives a strong appeal for them to come to Him. Make our hearts an altar of love for our Eucharistic Guest.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

"But I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people" (Ps. 21:7). "So shall His visage be inglorious among men, and His form among the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14). "Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not" (Isa. 53:3). "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein; wounds and bruises and swelling sores, they are not bound up nor dressed nor fomented with oil" (Isa. 1:6).

Is not this a terrible picture that the prophets have given us of the Man of sorrows? And this is He Who comes to me

in Holy Communion. Will I not comfort Him for what He suffered once? Will I not bind up His wounds of body and soul, and pour the ointment of my love upon His wounded heart? Will I not let Him rest His weary head upon my heart, His torn and bleeding hands upon my breast? Will I not support His tottering limbs with my own strong arms as the Cyrenian did; and, like Veronica, wipe the sweat and blood from His face?

Jesus is not suffering now, but all those things and more He suffered in His passion. Even now there are some who do not, will not, comfort Him for what He suffered then. Surely we are not one of these. Rather, by the warmth of our love we will console Him for their coldness. By our fidelity in receiving Him often and well we will atone for those who seldom or never come to receive the Bread of eternal life. No longer, then, will Jesus say: I looked "for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (Ps. 68:21).

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him" (Luke 23:27). We have attended the devotion of the Stations of the Cross. How do we assist at this devotion — in a halfhearted way, with little thought of the awful tragedy it pictures, with little appreciation of the fact that all this was once an actual, fearful reality? Do we understand that He Who trod this Way of suffering and shame and sorrow was the Son of God, almighty God Himself?

Think how the angels in heaven followed the sad procession to Calvary. Immersed in the beauty of the Beatific Vision they saw Him Who is the splendor and the beauty of that Vision now, in the human nature He had assumed, bruised, crushed under the weight of a cross, His heart burdened with the heavier weight of the sins of the world. They saw His weak, tottering, stumbling steps slowly treading the bitter way to Calvary; they saw Him fall and rise and fall again, weary beyond endurance. This the angels saw, the while they looked upon the glory of His divinity. They knew the love that brought Him to this. Do I?

HOLY COMMUNION

We have received Jesus in Holy Communion. He is with us, in us, He Whose way to Calvary we have tried to follow. Now, now is the time to thank Him for so much love. Now, better than ever, can we kiss His sacred wounds, and pour upon them the soothing oil of our grateful and undying love. Tell Him that we will not let Him bear the cross alone, we will not let His love be lost. Ask that each Communion we receive may bring us nearer to Him in His suffering then, and nearer to Him in His glory in heaven after.

THE VICTIM OF CALVARY

In Holy Communion we receive the Victim of Calvary, bearing in His glorified body the scars of His wounds; the same wounds so fearful to behold in His agony on the cross, but now shining with a resplendent light. Yes, He Who comes to us is He Who was fastened to the cross and hung upon it in bitterest pain and sorrow. The same sacred body that we receive in Holy Communion is the body that once was bleeding, disfigured, quivering in every nerve and muscle, dying in shame and torment. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein" (Isa. 1:6).

At the foot of the cross the mother of Jesus saw this, and mourned as no other mother ever mourned. Yes, but with the eyes of faith and love Mary saw the glory and the power of the Saviour's wounds; she saw the streams of grace and hope and life flowing from them to the souls of men. She saw a world redeemed by these wounds, heaven opened, and man raised to the height of innocence restored, of immortality regained.

All this we, too, may see in Holy Communion, not by sight but by faith and love. We have just received our Eucharistic Saviour. Adore Him with all our souls; tell Him how earnestly we love Him and thank Him for the mercy that brought Him to the cross then, and into our bodies and souls now; Jesus on the cross, Jesus in Holy Communion. "Greater love than this no man hath" (John 15:13). This is "the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). The Victim of Calvary is in us now. Let our bodies and souls be not tombs, but altars of answering love and sacrifice.

THE DEAD CHRIST

He is dead. "But the Author of life you killed" (Acts 3:15). Jesus permitted Himself in His human nature to die, to suffer the defeat, the frustration that death betokens. His death was real. His soul was wrenched from the body, leaving on the cross a body bereft of motion, power, feeling and of all that accompanies life. "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?" (1 Kings 15:32.) In His human nature the blessed Saviour gave up everything for us. He hung on the cross in utter destitution; and, when He had nothing left to give, He gave His life. "Greater love than this no man hath."

"For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come" (1 Cor. 11:26). Jesus chose to come to us, to give Himself to us under the appearance of bread. Is not this like to a white pall of death, not extinguishing but concealing the life and power and splendor of His glorified body? We have received Him. After a brief quarter hour or so the appearance of bread is dissolved, and the body of Jesus is withdrawn, though His spiritual presence remains. Does not this "show the death of the Lord"?

"Christ . . . dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9). Jesus died on the cross for us; surely that would seem the limit of all possible sacrifice, the fullest expression of an infinite love. His body is now incapable of suffering and death, yet in Holy Communion there is something of the external appearance of death; the little white Host is so still, so unresisting, so apparently helpless. Truly is this a vivid memorial of the death on the cross that gave life to the world. Truly does Holy Communion "show the death of the Lord until He come."

THE RISEN CHRIST

"I lay down My life, that I may take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (John 10:17, 18). Jesus laid down His life in a most terrible

manner, by His awful death on the cross. He took it up in a most glorious way by His resurrection from the dead, never more to suffer, never again to die. "But now Christ is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep. . . . For by a man [i.e., Adam] came death, and by a man [i.e., Christ] the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20, 21).

"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Jesus suffered and died to save us from eternal death. He rose from the dead that we may rise to the supernatural life of grace now and to the eternal life of heaven afterward. And this is He Who comes to us in Holy Communion. As far as the senses perceive He seems as lifeless as He was on the cross. In reality He is clothed in the splendor and beauty and power of His glorified humanity, of His risen body. "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29).

How still and helpless seems the Sacred Host we receive, even as Jesus' body was in the tomb. But now He is risen; and beneath the sacramental veil we receive not the dead body of Jesus but His glorified body, Jesus triumphant over sin and death, His living body, His soul, His humanity and divinity. "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). He is our life. Live, then, the life of Christ, fruitful in every good work, waiting for the day, "When Christ shall appear, Who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

The time has come when Jesus no longer will converse with men as He had done so often before. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more" (John 14:19). "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and I go to the Father" (John 16:28). These words Jesus said in His last discourse to His Apostles. Now they are fulfilled. "And He led them out as far as Bethania; and, lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven" (Luke 24:50, 51).

"Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in" (Ps.

23:7). He Whom we receive in Holy Communion is He Who at this same moment, in His glorified humanity, is seated at the right hand of His eternal Father. What a difference, what a contrast is here! Surrounded by the heavenly hosts, adoring, praising, glorifying Him in the midst of the splendors of His eternal kingdom; at the same time, under the lowly appearance of a little white Host, He comes to us, and all His glory is hidden.

What a difference, what a contrast is found between the welcome Jesus received when He entered into His kingdom in heaven and when He enters into His kingdom in our hearts, when He comes to us in Holy Communion! We must endeavor to make Him feel at home in our hearts. We should try, even though in our poor, weak ways, to lessen some little the great difference between heaven and our hearts. Adore, love, and praise Him, the while with all our souls we thank Him for the infinite mercy, the divine condescension and love that bring Him to us in Holy Communion.

HE WILL COME TO JUDGE THE WORLD

Three times the Son of God comes into this world: in His Incarnation, in Holy Communion, and at the end of time to judge all men. In His Incarnation and in Holy Communion He comes in meekness and mercy. On the day of Judgment, however, He will come in power and justice, to render to all men according to their works. "And when the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him" (Matt. 25:31, 32).

Do we give serious thought to this truth that He Whom we receive in Holy Communion is the Judge before Whom we must stand and give account of our stewardship? "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). Say to Him now, when He comes to us in meekness and mercy, what we will wish that we had said, when we face His power and justice on the awful day of reckoning. Pray now that not to us will be applied the word of prophecy: "They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and

their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them" (Wisd. 4:20).

What better preparation for the Judgment can we make than to receive Him as our Guest now Who will be our Judge then? Give Him now the loving welcome of a faithful, devoted soul, and He will give us then the welcome of a loving Father. Give Him our minds and hearts and wills in faith and love and service now, and we will not then have cause to fear. "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be confounded by Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

GOD'S WISDOM IN HOLY COMMUNION

"O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep" (Ps. 91:6). In wondering awe, in profound adoration we contemplate God's infinite wisdom shown in Holy Communion. Wishing to unite to Him His exiled children on earth, He devised a manner of accomplishing this union, a way so marvelous that only the divine Master-Mind could conceive it. As food becomes by nutrition a part of our physical substance, so by Holy Communion does Jesus unite our material and spiritual substance to Himself. He comes to us, enters into us under the form of food. "This is the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes" (Ps. 117:23).

Food of our soul, living bread, center and source of life, Holy Communion is, after the Incarnation, the most wonderful manifestation of divine wisdom and love. Truly the ways of God are wonderful. Adore and praise His wisdom and His love in Holy Communion. For He "doth great things and unsearchable and wonderful things without number (Job 5:9). "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33.) We thank Him that His divine wisdom is poured out for us in this pledge of His undying love.

Our faith and trust in God will not permit us to ask, as did the Jews, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:53.) We know that this Man is God Himself, infinite in wisdom and power. We acknowledge: "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:69). In humble, grateful

acceptance of this priceless proof of His divine wisdom and love, we pledge the love and devotion of our hearts and souls to our Eucharistic Lord and Lover. We pray for light to recognize more fully God's wondrous wisdom in this gift. We ask for grace to make better and more frequent use of the precious privilege of Holy Communion.

GOD'S POWER IN HOLY COMMUNION

"Come and behold ye the works of the Lord, what wonders He hath done upon earth" (Ps. 45:9). All creation gives testimony to the power and wisdom of the great God Who made these things and set the bounds and laws that govern and maintain them. "Let all Thy works, O Lord, praise Thee. . . . They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and shall tell of Thy power" (Ps. 144:10, 11). God Who made the vast orbs of the firmament made the tiny blade of grass. In both are displayed the same divine wisdom and power; both tell the same story of God's love for man, for whose benefit these things were made.

This is He Who comes to us in Holy Communion, the great and almighty God, of Whom the Psalmist speaks: "Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him. For He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created" (Ps. 32:8, g). The same power manifested in creation is no less present in Holy Communion. Who but God could so completely conceal both humanity and divinity under the appearance of a little white Host? Only God could truly say, "My flesh is meat indeed" (John 6:56).

"His word is full of power; neither can any man say to Him: Why dost Thou so?" (Eccles. 8:4.) God could have chosen many other ways of uniting us to Him in Holy Communion. He saw fit to come to us in the form of bread. He changed bread into His own living body, retaining the appearances of bread that we might have no difficulty in receiving Him as food. Adore His divine wisdom and power. "O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep" (Ps. 91:6). Thank Him, for: "Blessed are

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they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Apoc. 19:9).

GOD’S LOVE FOR US IN HOLY COMMUNION

“Behold how He loved him” (John 11:36). The Jews spoke thus of Jesus’ love for Lazarus, whom He was about to raise from the dead. Behold how Jesus loves me. He has raised me from the death of sin to the life of grace. And now He gives me not only the life of grace but the very Author and Source of life and grace, He gives me Himself in Holy Communion. “What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?” (Isa. 5:4.) There is nothing more, for He has given me all in Himself.

“For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebr. 12:29). He Who comes to us in Holy Communion is a consuming fire of love. As fire permeates the metal that is brought in contact with it, so will the fire of Jesus’ love fill our souls. Before it coldness and indifference melt away, to be replaced by the warmth of love, zeal, and grateful devotion. Holy Communion is the answer to our prayer: “Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, burning with love for us, inflame our hearts with love for Thee.”

“O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet” (Ps. 33:9). As our souls receive the light and warmth of divine love in Holy Communion, so will they taste the sweetness and happiness of His love and of His presence within us. We are happy in the love and in the presence of those dearest to us on earth. The blessed in heaven are supremely happy in the love and presence of God. So in Holy Communion, though we see Him not, Jesus truly comes to us and brings the abundance of His divine love. He is ours, and we are His: “My Beloved to me, and I to Him” (Cant. 2:16).

JESUS’ MERCY IN HOLY COMMUNION

“Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men. For He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things” (Ps. 106:8, 9). God alone can satisfy the empty soul, He alone can fill the hungry soul. He made us for

Himself, and all the pleasures and riches and beauty of earth are too little to fill one soul. Our souls are restless until they rest in Him. And so the mercy of God brought Him to us in Holy Communion. "They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him" (Wisd. 3:9).

"I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (John 14:18). No human mind can conceive the fearful loneliness of a soul in hell, a soul that never can have God. On earth there is a bitter loneliness, the loneliness of a soul estranged from God: "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2). They who love God hunger for closer union with Him. "For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" (Ps. 62:2.) Seeing our loneliness and our longing, God's mercy brings Him to us in Holy Communion, and we are orphans no longer.

God knows our need of Him, that without Him our life is dark and dreary and empty. He hears the cry of His children: "I stretched forth my hands to Thee; my soul is as earth without water unto Thee" (Ps. 142:6). Not in vain do we cry, for: "Behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (Zach. 2:10). "Fear not, for I am with thee" (Isa. 43:5). Truly the mercies of the Lord are shown most abundantly in Holy Communion. "They are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:23). "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest; for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee" (Ps. 114:7).

GOD'S CONDESCENSION IN HOLY COMMUNION

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof" (Matt. 8:8). We have even more reason to say this than had the centurion of old. We, perhaps more than he, believe and hold most certainly that He Who comes to us in Holy Communion is almighty God. The Infinite comes to the finite, the Creator to the creature, the Master to the servant. God comes to man, and takes up His abode with him. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:5.) "Who am I, O Lord God . . . that Thou shouldst give such things to me?" (1 Par. 17:16.)

“And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43.) This was Elizabeth’s salutation to Mary in the Visitation. And shall not we say to Jesus in Holy Communion: “Whence is this to me, that my Lord, my God should come to me?” His infinite condescension brought Him down to the poor and bleak stable of Bethlehem, brought Him down to the level of our humanity. It brought Him into our bodies and souls in Holy Communion. What further condescension could the great God of heaven show than this?

Before so great a love, before a condescension so sublime, so far transcending all human love and sacrifice, if our hearts be of flesh and not of stone, they cannot but be stirred to their very depths. And from these depths of our humble, loving, grateful hearts we cry out: “The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever” (Ps. 88:2). Dear Lord, how could You love us so much, You Who know what we ought to be and what we are? His answer is: “I am God. I love as only God can love.” Who would not love One Who so loves us?

GOD’S MEEKNESS IN HOLY COMMUNION

“Behold I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him” (Apoc. 3:20). In Holy Communion Jesus comes to us not demanding but asking to be admitted. He to Whom every door should be open meekly asks that we let Him come into our hearts. He asks it as though it were a favor we were granting Him, whereas it is He Who, by coming to us in Holy Communion, grants us the greatest favor we can have on earth. “Behold, thy King cometh to thee, meek” (Matt. 21:5).

Jesus came into the world in His Incarnation as a tiny, helpless infant. Afterward He hung on the cross of Calvary suffering, dying, dead. He redeemed the world by His meekness and obedience. “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). In Holy Communion He comes to us, in all outward appearance weaker even than the Babe of Bethlehem, as though bereft of all power and life. And yet He is the great

God, "In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the spirit of all flesh of man" (Job 12:10).

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29). Have we learned and practiced the lesson Jesus taught us in His Incarnate life and teaches us now in His Eucharistic life? What kind of a heart do we offer Him as His home on earth? Is it a heart in which, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain" (Luke 3:5)? Fervent be the prayer of our hearts to the divine Guest abiding with us in Holy Communion: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

GOD'S PATIENCE IN HOLY COMMUNION

Wonderful indeed is God's patience in Holy Communion. We do not realize this, because our minds fail to grasp what it means for the God of infinite perfection and sanctity to enter into a soul poor, imperfect, and wholly unworthy of Him. Harder yet is it to understand the terrible indignity to which Jesus subjects Himself when in Holy Communion He comes into the body, but not into the soul, of one guilty of mortal sin. Were He not of infinite patience He would destroy in a moment that sinner, guilty of a sacrilegious Communion. "And Thou didst forbear with them for many years" (2 Esdras 9:30).

Often does our Blessed Lord come in Holy Communion to souls free indeed from mortal sin but full of venial sins and imperfections. Often does He find a welcome in which there is but little warmth, a heart whose response to His love is tardy and weak. "But Thou, our God, art gracious and true, patient and ordering all things in mercy" (Wisd. 15:1). And so He comes even to those who so little deserve to have Him. "But, forasmuch as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg His pardon" (Jud. 8:14).

Why, O Lord, are You so patient with me? It is because Your mercy is infinitely greater than my unworthiness, great as that unworthiness is. You know how poor and weak is

the heart that You make Your home. You know how ungrateful and inconstant I have so often proved to be. Yet You come to me willingly and, oh, so lovingly. Truly Your patience is infinite to bear with one so unworthy, to do so much for one who does so little for You. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee" (Ps. 102:2).

GOD'S DESIRE FOR US IN HOLY COMMUNION

"Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me" (John 17:24). Because we cannot now come to Him Jesus comes to us. He wishes to be with us to unite us to Himself in Holy Communion. His desire to give Himself to us is far greater than our desires to receive Him. Our minds stand in wondering awe before this sublime mystery of love, the Infinite desiring the finite, the Creator coming to His creature, God uniting man to Himself in the intimate union of Holy Communion. This is, "The charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). The dark clouds of His awful passion and death are closing about the Blessed Saviour. Always thinking of others, never of Himself, on this night of the Last Supper Jesus made His last will and testament, giving us the priceless heritage of Holy Communion. His thought is not of the fearful ordeal before Him, but of the countless souls who will be united to Him. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him" (John 6:57).

"Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him with joy" (Luke 19:5, 6). Jesus says this to us as He did to Zacheus. Do we make ready the houses of our hearts and hasten to receive Him with joy? Think what it means that the great God wishes to come to us. He stands at the doors of our hearts. Do not keep Him waiting. Open the doors to Him quickly, gladly, gratefully. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:5.)

WHAT DOES GOD GIVE US IN HOLY COMMUNION?

“And you are filled in Him Who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10). In Holy Communion God gives us Himself, the Author of all graces, the Giver of all gifts. He Who alone can fill our hearts comes to us to fill them with His divine presence and to satisfy the longings of our souls. “For what have I in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?” (Ps. 72:25.) He Who is heaven’s beatitude makes our souls a heaven on earth. Though we cannot see Him, we possess Him as truly as do the blessed in heaven.

“How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?” (Rom. 8:32.) Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion, bringing abundant and most precious gifts. His desire to enrich us with the treasures of His gifts and favors is far greater than our desires to receive them. He knows this, yet He pours them into our souls, and makes our souls richer, happier, better than anything else on earth. “In Me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in Me is all hope of life and of virtue” (Ecclus. 24:25). Blessed are our souls so favored by God, so enriched by Holy Communion.

“Bless the Lord That made thee, and That replenisheth thee with all His good things” (Ecclus. 32:17). God made us, He redeemed us, and now He comes to us in Holy Communion and pours out upon us the love of His Heart, the riches of His graces, the supreme blessing of His presence. He gives us strength, courage, faith, and trust. “Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me” (Ps. 22:4). Truly are we filled with the good things of the Lord. “I will sing to the Lord, Who giveth me good things” (Ps. 12:6).

WHAT DO WE GIVE GOD IN HOLY COMMUNION?

“What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?” (Ps. 115:12.) In Holy Communion God gives Himself to us. Shall we not give ourselves to Him? He tells us clearly what He wishes: “Son, give Me thy heart” (Prov. 23:26). He wishes our love, our willing, wholehearted

service, refusing nothing, giving all. Nothing less will satisfy Him. How can we give Him less than all, when He gives us all? Be generous to Him Who is so generous to us.

In Holy Communion Jesus gives us His sacred Heart, that Heart burning with love for us, that Heart so tender and true, so merciful and kind, the Heart which so loved men that it found nothing too hard to bear, nothing too much to do, to gain the love of souls. This most sacred Heart once was pierced with a lance; and now, only too often, is pierced with the sharp sword of the sins of ungrateful men. Jesus gives us His Heart that we may console it, comfort it, soothe its bitter hurt by the ointment of our devoted love and grateful service. Is not this the least we can give Him?

“I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?” (Luke 12:49.) Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion to kindle in our hearts an answering fire to the flame of His love for us. Nothing hurts our Blessed Saviour more than the coldness, ingratitude, and malice of men who thus repay His love and mercy. Nothing pleases our Blessed Saviour more than the humble, loving, grateful loyalty of His friends -who thus try to comfort and console Him for those who hurt Him. We, whose hearts have been kindled from the flame of Jesus' love, can give Him this comfort.

THE PROMISE OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE TIME OF THE PROMISE

"YOU seek Me, not because you have seen miracles but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). Our Lord spoke these words to the Jews in the synagogue at Capharnaum, the day after He had fed over five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fishes. When the Jews had seen this miracle they said: "This is of a truth the Prophet That is to come into the world" (John 6:14). And yet the very next day some of them asked Him, "What sign, therefore, dost Thou shew that we may see and may believe Thee?" (John 6:30.)

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you" (John 6:27). Jesus is trying to raise their mind and heart above merely material things to the wonderful gift that He is about to promise them. Therefore He answered their request: "Lord give us always this bread," with the words: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert; and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:48-51).

Jesus thus prepared the Jews for the wonderful promise He was about to make. They saw the evidence of a supernatural power in the miracle by which so many were fed from a few loaves and fishes. Surely this should have brought the response of unquestioning faith, of full acceptance of His word. Instead, from many Jesus received only ingratitude and unbelief. "The Jews therefore murmured at Him because He had said, I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41). If only they had waited in faith and patience but a year longer, they would have understood both the Promise and its fulfillment. But they would not.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROMISE

“Most fully knowing that whatsoever He has promised He is able also to perform” (Rom. 4:21). The Holy Eucharist is so great a gift, beyond all other gifts of God to men after the Incarnation, that Jesus wished to bring our minds and hearts to a fuller knowledge and appreciation of this gift, of its nature and effects. The first three Gospel writers and St. Paul were inspired to tell us of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. St. John, writing long after these, instead of repeating the narrative of the institution, gave us the sublime discourse of our Lord, the promise of Holy Communion.

The words of our divine Lord in His promise of the Blessed Sacrament are simple and direct, and they give us a wonderful insight into the nature of Holy Communion, a clear understanding of what Holy Communion is. Jesus tells us without evasion or any figure of speech: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:51, 52, 56). He tells us simply, plainly that He will give us His own body and blood to be our food and drink.

In His promise Jesus tells us in equally plain and simple terms the effects of Holy Communion worthily received. “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day. . . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him. . . . He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me” (John 6:55, 57, 58). Does not this show the importance of the promise of Holy Communion? Do we often and fervently thank our blessed Lord for so graciously giving us this promise?

THE UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS

“If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin” (John 15:24). The unbelief of the Jews in the promise of Holy Communion came from their refusal to accept Jesus as their God and His word as divine truth. Jesus had exercised His public ministry

now for two years, and in that time the Jews had seen His wonderful works, works that no one could do of his own power unless he were divine. "The works that I do in the name of My Father, they give testimony of Me" (John 10:25).

Blinded by their unbelief the Jews asked: "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:53.) They fell into the gross error of thinking that Jesus meant they -were to eat His flesh and drink His blood in some horrible way, tearing and mangling His sacred flesh, drinking His blood poured out from His body. Had they believed in Him they would have known better, for Jesus told them that His living body would ascend into heaven. He told them that the mere eating of dead flesh "profiteth nothing"; it is the living body of Christ "that quickeneth" those who worthily receive it (John 6:64).

In our own day the same unbelief exists amongst those who do not accept Jesus as their God and His word as their law. Little do they think of His words, "except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54). Even amongst those of the household of the Faith there are some who, though they believe, do not care. Let them beware; let them awake to a realization of the grave danger that confronts them: "You shall not have life in you." Pray for them. Pray that this danger may never confront us.

THE VALUE OF GOD'S WORD

"The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried by the fire" (Ps. 11:7). The words of God are not as the words of men, fallible, uncertain, weak in knowledge and power. "For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth firm in heaven" (Ps. 118:89). The words of God are a light and a guide, directing our steps in the way of peace and justice and truth, the way that leads to heaven. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. 118:105). Truly, "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Jesus Christ is almighty God. Every word that He has spoken demands full acceptance from our minds and wills:

THE PROMISE OF HOLY COMMUNION

"Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Every word that He has spoken must be received with humble, grateful appreciation of His gracious mercy deigning to speak to us. "What is all flesh, that it should hear the voice of the living God?" (Deut. 5:26.) Remember that He Who spoke to the Jews in the synagogue at Capharnaum is He Who once said by His prophet: "So shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please" (Isa. 55:11).

We have a priceless treasure, a mine of spiritual wealth in the words of the Blessed Saviour in His promise of Holy Communion. Like the facets of a diamond flashing brilliance and beauty, the words of the promise flash wisdom and love, goodness and power of which only God is capable. Read His words often, study them carefully, meditate on them earnestly: and we shall draw from this divine fountain light and grace, strength and happiness. "Meditate upon these things, be wholly in these things, that thy profiting may be manifest to all" (1 Tim. 4:15).

THE SYNAGOGUE IN CAPHARNAUM

Go back in thought to the day, a year before the Saviour's death, when Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Capharnaum. Stand in the midst of the throng gathered there to hear the Master. Most of this throng had followed Him to the hillside beyond the lake of Tiberias, "Because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased" (John 6:2). There they witnessed the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and were fed by that miracle. These were the men who wished "to take Him by force, and make Him king" (John 6:15). Listen now to their words.

"They said, therefore, to Him: What sign therefore dost Thou shew, that we may see, and may believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (John 6:30, 31). Not content with the miracle they had witnessed, they asked for another sign, another proof that He came from heaven, that He was sent by His Father to give to man the bread that "giveth life to the world"

(John 6:33). They were seeking not so much their spiritual good as their material satisfaction. "You seek Me . . . because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26).

Our blessed Lord saw in the dull, earthly minds of many before Him little or no inclination to understand or to accept the wonderful promise He is about to make. His loving heart is sorely hurt because they will not see and acknowledge the love that gives so much. But "many waters cannot quench charity" (Cant. 8:7). His love is greater than their unworthiness. The light of His love shines brightly against the dark background of their unbelief and indifference. And in this setting Jesus gave to the world the sublime promise of Holy Communion.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

"Thou didst feed Thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven, prepared without labour, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste" (Wisd. 16:20). These words were written in the Old Testament of the manna, with which God fed the Jews for forty years, during their wandering in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. The Jews asked our Lord to give them a like sign, that they might believe in Him. Jesus told them of another bread, far excelling the manna both in its nature and in its effects, the bread of life.

"The bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world" (John 6:33). The manna preserved only physical life to the Jews, and that only for the while. "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead" (John 6:49). Its power was only that of ordinary bread. How different is the bread that the blessed Lord Jesus promised to the Jews and to us! This bread gives life to the soul, eternal life. This bread is the life of the soul. It is the principle and source of true life; and without it there can be no life.

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). The bread of life is Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man. We wonder that so many of the Jews failed to grasp this truth that Jesus repeated again and again in His promise of Holy

Communion. Should we not wonder more that so many in our own day fail to grasp this truth? Many who believe that He is God refuse to accept His words, clear, precise, and unmistakable as they are. Some who say that they believe live as though they believed not. "But my just man liveth by faith" (Hebr. 10:38).

I AM THE LIVING BREAD

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). Only God could say this; for the living bread that came down from heaven is filled with no ordinary life; it is not only living but is life itself. Like the sun that sends its rays upon the earth, giving warmth, strength, and life, so the living bread from heaven gives life and power to all that receive it worthily. This living bread holds within it the omnipotence, the wisdom, the greatness, the mysterious nature of the great God Himself; for this bread is none other than the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, the incarnate Son of God.

"The Jews therefore murmured at Him because He had said: I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41). They did not believe Him in spite of the wonders He had worked in their sight. If only they had shown some disposition to believe, if only they had the will, the desire to believe in and to accept His promise, their minds would have been enlightened, their hearts would have been moved, and they would have said what Peter said: "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:69). They did not believe because they would not.

"And they shall all be taught of God" (John 6:45). In the promise of Holy Communion, of the living bread from heaven, Jesus reveals a wonderful truth, teaches a doctrine deep and mysterious. We are heirs to that teaching, to that promise. By the grace of God we have gladly accepted it and have treasured it in our hearts. In grateful love and strong desire we humbly ask to be allowed to receive this living bread that came down from heaven, for we believe and we know that His promise is true: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:52).

THE BREAD THAT CAME FROM HEAVEN

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). Material bread comes from the earth. The bread of life, the living bread comes from heaven. Five times or more Jesus used the expression, the bread that came down from heaven, when He gave to the Jews the promise of Holy Communion. He tells them what that bread is: "The bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:52). It is the same flesh that He assumed in the Incarnation, the same flesh with which He ascended triumphant into heaven.

"The Jews therefore murmured at Him because He had said: I am the living bread which came down from heaven. And they said: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, Whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, I came down from heaven?" (John 6:41, 42.) How often this is repeated in our day! How often we see the same refusal to accept our blessed Lord and His promise of Holy Communion! Woe to the world because of unbelief; woe to those who have eyes and will not see, "For they have cast away the word of the Lord, and there is no wisdom in them" (Jer. 8:9).

We who have accepted His promise and treasure it have a duty of love and gratitude. By our fervent and frequent reception of the bread that came down from heaven we can comfort the Blessed Saviour for those who care neither for the promise nor its fulfillment. When Jesus looked into the unbelieving hearts of many in the synagogue at Capharnaum the hurt was bitter. At the same time He was looking into our hearts. God grant that He saw there a faith and devotion so deep and true that it consoled Him. What an honor, what a privilege to comfort the heart of Jesus!

THE BREAD THAT I WILL GIVE

"The bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:52). O, the depth of the mercies of the Lord! How far His love for souls has carried Him! Was it not enough that He should come down to earth in human

form, becoming man for us? Was it not enough that He should take our sins upon Himself, the Victim of atonement? His love stopped not here; He became our food, the nourishment of our souls. "The bread that I will give is My flesh." Under the form of food He enters into our bodies and souls.

"The bread that I will give is My flesh." Only God could say these words, for they could not be true of anyone else. He alone is infinite in power and resource, in wisdom and choice of means. And He saw fit to use this means, the most intimate that we can conceive, of uniting us to Himself, and, more wonderful still, of uniting Himself to us. What a mystery is this, that God should wish to unite Himself to us, the Creator entering into the creature, the Master abiding with His slave, the Infinite living in the finite!

"The bread that I will give." Yes, Jesus has now promised that He will give us this bread which is in very truth His own living body, His own living Self. "God is not a man that He should lie, nor as the Son of man that He should be changed. Hath He said, then, and will He not do? hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?" (Num. 23:19.) Like Abraham we too must believe and acknowledge, "that whatsoever He has promised He is able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). Our faith, strong and unquestioning, consoles Him for those who believe not and for those who care not.

IF ANY MAN EAT THIS BREAD

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51, 52). Have you not noticed how often our blessed Lord in His promise of Holy Communion speaks of "the bread"? He is telling the Jews and us how He will give Himself to us, how we are to receive Him into our bodies and souls, how He will come to us. It is His answer to the question, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:53.)

"Thou hast multiplied Thy wonderful works, O Lord my God; and in Thy thoughts there is no one like to Thee" (Ps. 39:6). Who but God would have thought of so wonderful

a means of coming to each one of us, of uniting Himself to each one in so intimate a way? In the material order what closer union is there than that between food and the person nourished by it? What act is there more natural, more easy than taking nourishment? And so Jesus comes to us in the form of food; and, "He that made me rested in my tabernacle" (Ecclus. 24:12).

"Is the hand of the Lord unable?" (Num. 11:23.) "Is there any thing hard to God?" (Gen. 18:14.) Cannot God do what He wills? "His word is full of power; neither can any man say to Him: Why dost Thou so?" (Eccles. 8:4.) He Who is the great God of heaven came on earth in the form of a helpless infant. That poor, tortured Man dying on the cross of Calvary is God. Can He not, then, come to us in the form of food, of bread, if He sees fit to do so? "The bread that I will give is My flesh." We do believe Him.

UNLESS YOU EAT

"Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54). This is Jesus' response to the murmuring and questioning of the Jews, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" He demands their complete faith in Him and in His words, leaving the time and manner in which the promise will be fulfilled to be revealed when and how He sees fit. He has spoken; if they will not accept His promise and its fulfillment they shall not have eternal life.

Unless you eat you will die. That the body cannot live without physical nourishment is a law of the natural order. The same law holds good in the supernatural order. Jesus has given to our souls a supernatural food, His own real, living body and blood. If we refuse this nourishment our souls cannot have supernatural life here or hereafter. This refers to those who can receive this food and will not. For those who through no fault of theirs cannot receive Holy Communion God provides other means. Jesus had said: "Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out" (John 6:37).

Few there are who refuse to nourish the body; but how many there are who refuse the food of the soul! All are

eager to sustain natural life; but not all care for the greater life, the supernatural life of the soul that endures forever. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). God's word is clear: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." We who believe and live accordingly should thank God for the grace that is ours. Pray for those who do not.

HE HATH EVERLASTING LIFE

"He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life" (John 6:55). Jesus promises that when we receive Him worthily in Holy Communion we receive also the pledge of eternal life. It is as though in coming to us He places in our hands a deed to everlasting life, a passport to heaven. He makes us no longer creatures of time but children of eternity. We shall live the life for which He made us, the life of a happy and perfect union with Him forever in heaven. What would we not give to secure so great and good a promise?

Jesus does not say, "He will have everlasting life," but, "He hath everlasting life." We already have it; for in Holy Communion we receive the Source of eternal life; we receive Him, "Who is your life" (Col. 3:4); we receive Him Who said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). How can we receive the very Principle, the Source and Cause of eternal life, and not receive the life? "And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life. And this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11, 12). In Holy Communion we receive the Son.

Is it not strange that so many are solicitous for the preservation of their physical life, but give no thought nor care to their spiritual life? Their interest centers upon that which will last for only a short while, and they are unmindful of the life that will never end. When the body dies the soul must keep on existing. That existence will be either an eternal death of darkness and misery or an everlasting life of light and happiness. It is my prerogative to choose now

what I will have. "Except you eat... you shall not have life in you. He that eateth ... hath everlasting life" (John 6:54, 55).

I WILL RAISE HIM UP IN THE LAST DAY

"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be confounded by Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28). As surely as we are living on earth now, so surely shall we stand some day before the judgment seat of God. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). As surely as we now abide in Him and He in us in Holy Communion, so surely shall His promise be fulfilled, "I will raise him up in the last day." Then, "when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be confounded."

What a consoling promise, that God will raise this poor body of ours from the corruption of the grave, will reunite it to our soul, and we shall stand before His judgment seat unafraid and unashamed! On that day when "He shall judge the world with justice and the people with His truth" (Ps. 95:13). He will be mindful of His word, "I will raise him up in the last day." How comforting is the assurance that we need not fear to have Him as our Judge Whom we have often and worthily received as the Food of eternal life!

This poor body of ours, subject to sickness, death, and decay, will one day be gloriously changed. "And the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). Blessed are we who have received Jesus often and well in Holy Communion. We have given Him our bodies and souls for His earthly home; we are living tabernacles of our Eucharistic God. We bear within ourselves not only the promise of a glorious resurrection but the Author of that promise: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). On the last day He will say to us: "Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not" (Mark 6:50).

MY FLESH IS TRULY FOOD

"For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:56). In the promise of Holy Communion

Jesus repeats and emphasizes the statement, which the Jews found so hard to accept, that He will give us His flesh and blood as food and drink; that we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood. He makes it clear that He is not speaking in a figurative but in a literal sense. Therefore does He say: "My flesh is truly food and My blood is truly drink." When He says "truly," He means just what it signifies.

"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Have not they reason to fear who refuse to accept the word of God so clearly spoken in the promise of Holy Communion? Jesus is God; His word is truth. They who fail to accept His word or to order their life in accordance with His word cannot escape the consequences. They who refuse to believe in His promise just as He gave it must pay the penalty of their unbelief. "To whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were incredulous?" (Hebr. 3:18.)

There are those who know that Jesus has said, "My flesh is truly food," yet they have little desire to receive the food His infinite mercy offers them. What can He think of them? In Jesus' parable of the guests bidden to a feast the master of the house said of those who refused to come: "But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24). We who gladly, gratefully receive the precious food of Christ's living body in Holy Communion must pray for those who do not believe, who will not receive Him.

MY BLOOD IS TRULY DRINK

"My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:56). In the Sacrifice of the Mass the priest changes bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. He then receives our blessed Lord in Holy Communion under both forms: of bread and of wine. In the present discipline of the Church the faithful, except those of the Oriental Rites in communion with the See of Rome, receive the body and blood of Jesus under the form of bread alone. Under the form of bread is the living, glorified body of Christ, from which the blood is not separated in reality.

“Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27, 28). Was it not enough that Jesus shed His blood for us, from the bloody sweat in Gethsemani to the last drops that came from His dead body on the cross when the soldier pierced it with a lance? And now He gives us His blood to be the sustenance of our souls and bodies, for the attainment of eternal life which the shedding of that blood has purchased for us. His blood is a fountain of grace and life to all who drink thereof.

The same precious blood poured out on Calvary, the blood that redeemed the world, we receive in Holy Communion. One drop of that most sacred blood could cleanse a thousand guilty worlds. One drop of the blood of Christ can change a soul mired with the unspeakable filth of sin into a spirit pure and white as snow. Not one drop only but all the blood of the humanity of Christ is confided to our care, is ours, when Jesus gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. How pure, how holy must be the vessel that holds the blood of Christ! I am that vessel.

HE ABIDETH IN ME

“He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me” (John 6:57). This is no figure of speech, it is a reality. In Holy Communion we abide in God, we live in Him, we dwell in Him. To live in God on earth, though we do not see Him as we will in heaven, to be so close to Him, all this surpasses our power of realization, of grasping: yet it is true, for He said so. “Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed” (John 20:29).

The weary soul has found its rest, the hungry soul is filled with Him Who is its All, the thirsting soul has come to the fountain of eternal life. The soul abides in Him Who is the very beatitude of heaven, the light and the glory thereof. This and more the Blessed Saviour tells us in the simple words, “He abideth in Me.” Abiding in God; is not this heaven on earth, the nearest approach to it that the

pilgrim soul can have until its journey is over and it enters into the glory of the Lord?

What better preparation for heaven can we have than to abide in God in Holy Communion? The more we desire to live in Him, with Him, always close to Him in this world, the greater is the assurance that we shall abide with Him forever in heaven. Let this be the cry of our souls: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" (Ps. 62:2.) Holy Communion is the answer to that cry, for in Holy Communion we abide in Him, the thirst of our souls is sated, and we are "become in His presence as one finding peace" (Cant. 8:10).

AND I IN HIM

In the promise of Holy Communion Jesus tells us that He abides, remains in those who receive Him: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:57). He comes to us not for a few passing moments only, He comes to stay with us as long as we wish to have Him. For about a quarter of an hour, as long as the appearance of bread remains, the living, glorified body of Christ is actually present in our bodies. When the appearance of bread is no longer present His body no longer remains, His spiritual presence does.

How precious is that quarter of an hour! How priceless each moment, passing all too quickly! There is no time to waste. There is so much to say to Him, so much to hear from Him. "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me; for He will speak peace unto His people" (Ps. 84:9). Yes, He will speak words of wondrous peace to us. He speaks not to our ears but directly to our souls. O, the happiness, the privilege of this audience with God, of these precious moments between God and us! "My Beloved to me, and I to Him" (Cant. 2:16).

The quarter hour has passed. But God's promise does not fail: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." He does not leave us; His bodily presence does, but His spiritual presence remains,

and will remain all day and the next and all the days of our life. And so we walk with God, we live with God. "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). I am never lonely or alone, for God is with me. He is our "Emmanuel," "God with us." Truly we are God's favored children.

HE SHALL LIVE BY ME

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58). In His human nature Jesus is sent by His Father and lives by His Father. In His divine nature Jesus lives the same life as the Father, being with the Father and the Holy Ghost the same one, only God. In the promise of Holy Communion Jesus tells us that we shall live by Him, because of Him, with Him, and in Him. In some finite yet intimate way we shall be united to the life of Christ.

"I am the vine; you, the branches" (John 15:5). As the branches receive their life from the vine, so in Holy Communion the life of Christ flows from Him to us; and we live by Him because of Him. What a glorious privilege and honor is this, to live because of God, to live by Him, to partake of His life, to possess the very Source of life! "For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. 35:10). Holy Communion fulfills perfectly the words of Jesus: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Because now Christ is our life, because now we live by Him, for Him, with Him, we must conform our thoughts, words, and acts to His, we must walk as He walked. "As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith" (Col. 2:6, 7). Let us thank our Eucharistic God Who has given to us Himself, His life, His grace. Ask Him that we "may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10).

THIS SAYING IS HARD

"Many, therefore, of His disciples, hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John 6:61.) They who spoke thus had not the spirit of Abraham, who: "In the promise also of God staggered not by distrust, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God; most fully knowing that whatsoever He has promised He is able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20, 21). These men had followed Jesus, had heard His words, had witnessed His miracles; yet they failed not only in believing but in the desire to believe. If they had truly wished to believe they would have had the grace to believe.

There is a terrible mystery in the unbelief of these disciples. It is true, "this saying is hard" for merely human wisdom to accept; but they were followers of Him Who is the true wisdom, the light of the world, "In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). They had heard Him say: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent" (John 6:29). Had they truly believed in Him Whom they professed to follow they would have believed and acknowledged: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

"This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" They can hear it, they can accept it in full and unquestioning faith who truly believe that Jesus is God, that He can neither deceive nor be deceived. They can hear it who trust Him and His word in humility of mind and heart, in complete submission of both to Him Who is the eternal Truth. They can hear it who believe that "The declaration of Thy tvords giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones" (Ps. 118:130). Is not this why we by God's grace believe in His promise and live by its fulfillment?

WILL YOU ALSO GO AWAY?

"After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away?" (John 6:67, 68.) Look into the Heart of Jesus, and see the terrible hurt that nigh crushed that

sacred Heart. His most precious promise to man, that should have been received eagerly, gratefully, humbly, instead met with coldness and unbelief even amongst many of His followers. Then Jesus sorrowfully turned to His Apostles and asked them the saddest question that could be asked, "Will you also go?" "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5).

They "walked no more with Him." Terrible is the punishment of determined refusal to accept God and His word. If men will not have the light, they must have darkness; if they will not have life, death shall be their portion. Jesus said: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He also said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life" (John 6:55). For those who will not believe His promise, who will not profit by its fulfillment, the word of God stands: "You shall not have life in you" (John 6:54).

"And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:69). If we leave Jesus, to whom shall we go for life, light, and happiness? Men of the world have sought these things in vain, for they did not seek them where they can be found. "O that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end!" (Deut. 32:29.) God has given us to know that our life and happiness are to be found in Holy Communion. Thank Him for the grace to believe, and ask for the grace to make good use of His precious gift.

THANK GOD FOR HIS PROMISE

"Hath He said, then, and will He not do? Hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?" (Num. 23:19.) We who believe in God's infinite power, we who believe that Jesus is God, rest securely in His promise of Holy Communion. But do we meditate enough on that promise; do we recognize how good God is to give us this promise for the comfort and solace of our souls? Do we thank Him as we should for the promise that has brought so much hope and strength and happiness into our lives? Thank Him for every word of this most precious promise.

"Many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. 13:17). Thank God for the special favor He has shown to us in His promise of Holy Communion. "For the promise is to you and to your children" (Acts 2:39). Think not that it was because we above all others have merited to receive this promise. "Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). "Therefore will I give thanks to Thee, O Lord" (2 Kings 22:50).

"But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). We, too, should keep in our minds and hearts all the words of Jesus' promise of Holy Communion. We should meditate on them often and earnestly. "Lay up these My words in your hearts and minds. . . . Teach your children that they meditate on them" (Deut. 11:18, 19). This injunction of the Old Law surely has even greater application to God's great gift in the New Law. The greatest and best appreciation that we can show to Jesus for His most gracious promise of Holy Communion is the frequent, fervent, grateful reception of His most precious gift.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE

JESUS' THREE GIFTS TO MEN

AMONG the multitude of Jesus' gifts to men three stand out above all others; from these three flow every grace and blessing. The first is the Incarnation, when Jesus came on earth to share our human nature, to be our Brother. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: I will declare Thy name to My brethren" (Hebr. 2:11, 12). Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, the almighty Son of God came on earth, a weak and helpless Infant, "that He might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5).

"Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. 1:5). Jesus' second gift to us is the gift of His life, sacrificed for us, for our salvation. "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins" (Col. 1:14). He suffered as no man ever suffered before or since, and "by His bruises we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). He died that we might live forever. "Who died for us that ... we may live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:10). We who were estranged are now reconciled to God by Him, "making peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20).

Jesus' third gift to us is Holy Communion. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. 31:3). So great is this love that, not content with coming to us in the Incarnation and redeeming us by the sacrifice of His life, Jesus wishes to draw us to Him, to unite us to Him in Holy Communion. This precious gift contains both the Incarnation and the Redemption, to the extent that it gives us not only the divinity but also the humanity of Christ that was born, lived, and died for us. Truly this is "the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

THE TIME OF THE INSTITUTION

"Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee" (John 17:1). Our Lord spoke these words on His way to Gethsemani, referring to His passion and death and to His glorious resurrection. May we not apply these words to the hour when Jesus will give us the Holy Eucharist, in which He will be glorified in the countless souls who will receive Him with faith and love and grateful joy in all centuries to come? The hour is come, the blessed hour, when man will receive his God as the nourishment of his soul, as the food of eternal life.

Thirty-three years had passed since Jesus was born in the stable at Bethlehem. About a year had elapsed since His memorable promise of Holy Communion given to the Jews in the synagogue at Capharnaum in Galilee. It was the night preceding the day of His awful death on Calvary; only two or three hours before His agony in the garden of Gethsemani, the beginning of His bitter passion. Already the clouds of sorrow and suffering loomed darkly about the Blessed Saviour as He sat at table with His Apostles to eat with them His last supper on earth.

"Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world. He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He chose this time above all times to give this abiding proof of His love. Not content with suffering and dying for us, He would stay with us, live in us all the days of our life. This is why He said: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). He loved us unto the end, as only God can love.

THE SCENE OF THE INSTITUTION

"And when the hour was come He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him" (Luke 22:14). It was the evening of Holy Thursday and the feast of the Passover had begun, when Jesus sat at table with His Apostles for the ceremonial supper in which the paschal lamb was eaten. He chose this solemn occasion to give to the world for all future ages

the Lamb of God That on the morrow would be sacrificed on the cross of Calvary; to give us, under the appearances of bread and wine, His own body and blood to be our food and drink.

The paschal supper with its prayers and hymns nears its close. The Apostles wait in silence, the while the blessed Master looks upon them with a love so great that even the angels wonder. He sees Thomas, who but a few days before had said: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John 11:16). He sees Peter, generous-hearted, zealous, impetuous; He sees the pure, loving heart of John; He sees in the souls of all, save one, loyal, devoted attachment. Judas probably had not yet left the room; and Jesus looked into the awful darkness of that guilty soul.

Jesus was looking into our souls, too. With His divine omniscience He saw the souls of all who in every succeeding age would receive the precious gift He was about to institute. Did He see in our souls the faith and love and unselfish devotion that so good a gift demands? Did He see the eager longing, the hunger and thirst that could be sated only by such a gift? God grant that He did. God grant that we consoled Him for those who would not have His gift, for those who would receive it poorly, perhaps even sacrilegiously.

WEIGH WELL EACH WORD

"Lay up these My words in your hearts and minds" (Deut. 11:18). Go back in thought, in spirit to the time and the scene of the Last Supper. Let us take our places with the Apostles. Listen to the words of the divine Master as they listened. We are about to hear words that no mortal ears had heard until that day of days when Jesus gave us the fulfillment of the promise that He had made a year before. We are about to hear words as great in meaning and importance as the words He spoke at the dawn of creation, when "He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. 32:9).

The words we are about to hear are words of divine power and mercy and love. "Keep them in the midst of thy heart; for they are life to those that find them, and health to all

flesh" (Prov. 4:21, 22). Weigh them well, think of them, try to realize more and more their deep and wondrous meaning. These words hold within them life, strength, comfort, and happiness such as no words of mortal man could have or give. These words hold the mystery of Jesus' love for us, of the divine, infinite charity that gives us God's gifts and the Giver Himself.

Jesus' words in the institution of the Holy Eucharist are few and simple; yet all the books that men can write would hold but a little of the great truth these words reveal. These words are an inexhaustible treasure of spiritual riches; but we must seek them, search them out; and, having found them, rejoice as one who has found a priceless gem. "My heart hath been in awe of Thy words. I will rejoice at Thy words, as one that hath found great spoil" (Ps. 118:161, 162). Weigh well and ponder in our hearts the words that gave us the Holy Eucharist.

GOD'S WORD IS TRUE

"Are not My words good to him that walketh uprightly?" (Mich. 2:7.) Nothing can be as completely, absolutely certain as the word of God. Human knowledge is fallible. God's word is infallible, for it proceeds from Him Who is truth itself. Jesus is God; and He has spoken. His word cannot fail. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Luke 21:33). "The word of our Lord endureth for ever" (Isa. 40:8). There is no doubt, no possibility of mistake; what God has said remains absolutely, unchangeably true. "For I am the Lord, and I change not" (Mal. 3:6).

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was to me a joy and gladness of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Not all take His word and accept it unquestioningly, gladly. Not all can say: "The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist" (Isa. 50:5). Therefore did Jesus say, reproving the unbelieving Jews: "He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God" (John 8:47). We who are of God are about to hear His words instituting the Holy Eucharist. Listen to them in deepest reverence, in grateful awe, in loving faith.

Rest upon the truth of God. Lean confidently upon His word; put all our trust in it, give to it the full assent of our minds by faith, the full surrender of our hearts by love. Tell Him confidently: "I know Whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12). In spirit, in thought we are about to enter into the Holy of holies. Lest the effulgence of this wonderful revelation, upon which we are about to meditate, dazzles and blinds us, prepare now in all reverence and humility for the consideration of this sublime truth; "For the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5).

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

"O Lord God, behold Thou hast made heaven and earth by Thy great power and Thy stretched out arm; no word shall be hard to Thee" (Jer. 32:17). As we prepare to meditate on the institution of the Holy Eucharist, -we humble ourselves before God's power and wisdom and love. "Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet. 5:6). We humble ourselves before His mighty power, exercised as truly here and now as it was in the dawn of creation, -when He said: "Be light made. And light was made" (Gen. 1:3). His word, full of power then, is full of power now.

"Is there any thing hard to God?" (Gen. 18:14.) Cannot He Who made all things by His almighty word, by the same almighty word change bread and wine into His living body and blood? "For He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. 148:5). We need to keep before our minds clearly, strongly that the words of consecration are an exercise of the omnipotence of God. The same power that decreed the creation decreed the consecration. "For the Lord of hosts hath decreed, and who can disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it away?" (Isa. 14:27.)

The angels look in reverent awe and adoring wonder at the power of God manifest in the creation of the heavens and the earth and all the marvels contained therein. They look in no less wonder and awe at the omnipotence of God manifest in the institution of the Holy Eucharist, wherein His word changes bread and wine into His own very body

and blood. We, too, must be deeply conscious that in both instances is manifest the same divine omnipotence. In all faith and humility we bow before this power, and acknowledge: "I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee" (Job 42:2).

JESUS SAID

"And whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples, and said. . . . And, taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying . . ." (Matt. 26:26, 27). In similar words Mark and Luke give us the same narrative. St. Paul, who came to the Faith later, tells us: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23-26); and he repeats substantially the words of the three Evangelists. This is the outline of the picture we are about to contemplate. Jesus spoke the words that gave us the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

"Jesus said." His words are few, simple, and clear, but they mean so much, they effect so much. No one but God could speak these words, for spoken only by God could they have any meaning, spoken only by Him could they demand and receive acceptance. Because He is God, the eternal Truth, we must either accept these words fully and freely or we must face the consequences of our unbelief. "If we believe not, He continueth faithful, He can not deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). "Nor will I suffer My truth to fail" (Ps. 88:34). "For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth firm in heaven" (Ps. 118:89).

"Jesus said." We are about to hear, to ponder over His words of divine power and love, words that have so wonderfully enriched our lives, words that have brought God to us and us to Him in the most intimate union possible on earth. The Lord has spoken; it is enough. "They that fear the Lord will not be incredulous to His word" (Ecclus. 2:18). Please God, we will never let it be said of us: "To whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were incredulous?" (Hebr. 3:18.) Let us enter into His rest.

THIS IS MY BODY

"Take ye, and eat. This is My body" (Matt. 26:26). Because we have meditated deeply on the truth that these are the words of almighty God, we are better prepared to realize something of their stupendous meaning. He Who made the universe out of nothing now changes bread into the same living body that He assumed in the Incarnation. He said so. "This" which Jesus held in His holy and venerable hands on the night of the Last Supper was unleavened bread. On that night of the Passover no other bread was to be found in any Jewish home.

"This is"; How much the word "is" has accomplished! That which a moment before was bread Jesus now declares to be something else. What matters it that all the appearances of bread remain? Jesus tells us what it now really is. Which will we believe: the word of God clearly spoken, or the testimony of our senses which can tell us only what comes within their reach?

Sight and touch and taste all fail us now.
 Hearing only safely can be trusted.
 That which God has said I do believe.
 Nothing truer can be than this word of Truth.

"This is My body": That which was bread is no longer bread; Jesus has changed it into His own body. He said so; for He said: "This is My Body." What further proof do we need than God's own word? There is no question of His power to do this. There can be no question of the fact that He did this. Either He changed the bread into His body, or He said something that was not true, something that He did not mean. "God is not a man, that He should lie. . . . Hath He said, then, and will He not do?" (Num. 23:19.) O God, I do believe.

THIS IS MY BLOOD

"And, taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27, 28). The chalice in the

Saviour's hands held only wine until the words of consecration were spoken. Jesus chose wine as the substance to be changed into His blood. Does not the blood of the grape crushed out of the fruit bring to our minds the blood of the Redemption poured out for us from Jesus' most sacred body? And now the figure becomes the reality.

"This is My blood": In the chalice the wine is no longer there. That which was wine Jesus now declares to be His blood, though the appearances of wine remain. Because Jesus said: "This is My blood," it is His blood. It is the same blood that soon would be wrung from Him in the agony in Gethsemani, in the scourging and the crowning with thorns, in the crucifixion. It is the same blood that the angels would gather and bring back to the sacred body of Jesus when He arose from the dead, never again to be separated actually from that body.

When Jesus said, "This is My body; this is My blood," the bread and wine were changed into His body and blood just as His body and blood actually were at that moment. The appearances remained separate one from the other, but the body and blood of Jesus continued united in the living humanity of Christ. And so it always will be. Whether we receive the body and blood of Jesus under both appearances or under one alone, we receive His body and blood entire and undivided, simply because we receive them as they really are. "I am the living bread" (John 6:51).

IN MEMORY OF ME

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19). This command of our Lord to His Apostles could not be obeyed unless He gave them the power to do what He had done, to change bread and wine into His own living body and blood. Nor was this power given to them for their use alone, but was to be handed down to their successors for all time to come. Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist for all the faithful in every age. This greatest gift of divine love was not confined to one time or people, even as His love is not thus bound.

"If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever"

(John 6:52). In His promise of the Holy Eucharist Jesus made clear that this precious gift is intended for all. He even went so far as to say of those who can but will not receive Him: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54). As the promise is for all, so its fulfillment is for all. And so the Blessed Saviour gives to us, through His Church, His sacred body and blood in Holy Communion.

"For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come" (1 Cor. 11:26): the memorial of the death of Christ, the memorial of His undying love. Thus does He wish us to remember Him. In this almost His dying hour, for in less than twenty-four hours He would be dead on the cross, He leaves us a priceless heritage, the most precious gift that even God can give, Himself. He gave us all; His grace, His love, His very life, and now He gives us Himself. "Do this in memory of Me."

TAKE YE AND EAT

In all reverence and humility let us draw nearer to the great, loving Heart of Jesus, in the moment when He held in His sacred hands that which was bread but which now is His body. Behold the Blessed Saviour standing before each of His Apostles, giving them with His own hands His own body to be their food. "Take ye, and eat." Look into His Heart, and see there "the charity, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19), the love that stops at nothing, that gives all in giving Himself. See the eagerness with which He gives Himself to them.

"Take ye, and eat." Jesus' love goes beyond His Apostles to the faithful souls in all ages to come, to whom He gives Himself to be their life, their strength, their All. His love goes out to us, and He bids us come, and "taste, and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9). He calls us: "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits" (Ecclus. 24:26). Oh, if only we could look into His sacred Heart, and see there the love that burned so brightly for us on the night of the Last Supper!

"Take ye, and eat." The same human flesh that accomplished our redemption Jesus now gives to be our food. Not only is He the divine Victim of atonement, He is "the bread of life . . . the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:48, 51). He not only died for us, He lives in us that we may live in Him: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:57). Bear in mind the injunction of St. John Chrysostom: "When you are about to approach . . . to the sacred mystery . . . think that, though you are dust and ashes, you receive Christ's body and blood."

DRINK YE ALL OF THIS

"Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. 9:5). These words were written of the wisdom that comes from God, inviting souls to partake of the feast she has prepared. Their perfect fulfillment is found in Jesus' invitation to the divine feast which He has prepared for* us, in which He gives us His most precious blood to drink: "Drink ye all of this" (Matt. 26:27). God invites man to partake of the divine nourishment of the living blood of the incarnate Saviour, the blood that gave life to the world dead in sin, the blood shed on Calvary's cross.

We who receive Holy Communion under the appearance of bread alone, are assured that we truly receive the blood of the Redemption, not now poured out from the awful wounds of Jesus' sacred body but united with, living in His glorified body. "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more" (Rom. 6:9). St. Paul makes very clear that the body and blood of Jesus are not actually separated, that both are under each sacramental appearance. "Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

How precious is a single drop of the blood of Christ! Jesus gave every drop of blood for the Redemption; and now He offers His blood in the same generous profusion in Holy Communion. "Drink ye all of this. For this is My

blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27, 28). Accept this invitation gratefully and often. We will be among those who “have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Apoc. 7:14). We will be among those who “are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Apoc. 19:9).

THE FRUIT OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE TREE OF LIFE

"COME over to Me, all ye that desire-Me, and be filled with My fruits" (Ecclus. 24:26). Holy Communion is a treasure house of divine gifts. "Hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) It is a garden of the choicest flowers from heaven, of graces and blessings: "Grace is like a paradise in blessings" (Ecclus. 40:17). It is a river of the water of eternal life: "The river of God is filled with water" (Ps. 64:10). It is a tree bearing more precious fruit than "the tree of life also in the midst of Paradise" (Gen. 2:9); it is the tree of life of the New Dispensation.

In Holy Communion we receive the Author of all grace, the Source of eternal life, the Possessor of true riches. "With Me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice. For My fruit is better than gold and the precious stone" (Prov. 8:18, 19). All these things Jesus brings to our souls when He comes to us in Holy Communion. The riches of God are ours: "That I may enrich them that love Me, and may fill their treasures" (Prov. 8:21). To the faithful is given to partake of the fruit of the Tree of life, "that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

When Adam sinned God expelled him from paradise, saying: "Lest perhaps he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Gen. 3:22). Now our blessed God and Saviour has said: "Take ye, and eat" (Matt. 26:26). "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52). Blessed are we that the mercy of God permits us, invites us, even commands us to eat of the fruit of the tree of eternal life. "The mercies of the Lord I shall sing for ever" (Ps. 88:2).

THE WALL OF SEPARATION

"Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?" (Matt. 22:12.) As there was no place at the wedding feast for the man who came wholly unfit and unprepared, so there is no place at the feast of Holy Communion for those not clothed in the garment of sanctifying grace. Holy Communion and its fruit are for those souls only that are raised to the supernatural life by the gift of sanctifying grace. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Wonder not that I said to thee, you must be born again" (John 3:6, 7).

"For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. 1:4). The God of all wisdom and holiness will not enter into a soul until that soul is purified by sanctifying grace, clothed in the garment of holiness, "dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). The soul in either original sin or actual mortal sin is hemmed in by a wall that separates it from God. Only when that wall is broken down can that soul be united to God; for, "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2).

Through baptism we have been cleansed from original sin, we have received sanctifying grace, we have been raised to supernatural life. Through the sacrament of penance, worthily received, sanctifying grace has been restored if it had been lost by the commission of mortal sin. The wall of separation between God and us has been broken down, and we are free. "But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). And now my God will come to me in Holy Communion.

HOLY COMMUNION INCREASES SANCTIFYING GRACE

Once raised to the high plane of supernatural life, the soul begins its journey to heaven, or resumes it, if its progress had been interrupted, stopped by the commission of mortal sin. Every moment, every phase and circumstance of that journey is marked and influenced by the presence and action

of sanctifying grace in the pilgrim soul. That grace is capable of increase, in fact, demands increase, for grace is dynamic, not stagnant. The life of a Christian should be a life of constant progress in grace and virtue: "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

Holy Communion is the greatest means of increasing sanctifying grace in our soul, for we receive the very Source of all grace, and Jesus does not come to us empty handed. Every Communion worthily received furthers our progress to heaven, increases our merit now, and adds to the glory and happiness that will be ours hereafter. The degree of this glory and happiness will be determined by our share in the life of God in heaven; and that share will be determined by the degree of sanctifying grace we possessed at the hour of death. "For star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41).

How wonderfully does God manifest herein His mercy and love! To our poor efforts He attaches so great a good, so great a reward. Grace leads to grace; each response we make to grace received leads to further graces given. And so we climb the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven; each round bringing us closer to Him in the union of Holy Communion, bringing us nearer to the happy day of our eternal Communion with Him in heaven. "Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him. . . . For He hath satisfied the empty soul" (Ps. 106:8, 9).

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul" (Ps. 65:16). Well may we all say this, especially after Holy Communion, when our soul has been enriched by the treasures of grace that Jesus gives us with Himself. But do we realize how great and precious are these treasures? Are we aware of what God's grace is accomplishing in our souls? Do we recognize the fruits of Holy Communion that are given to us so generously? Among these fruits is the spirit of faith, by which we live in our faith.

"And I will espouse thee to Me in faith" (Osee 2:20). All

who possess sanctifying grace have in greater or less degree the spirit of faith, by which they not only believe the truths of God but also order their lives accordingly. But the spiritual vision or insight of many is imperfect. They see only dimly, vaguely the beauty of the divine truths, of God's providence, the wonders of His wisdom and power, of His love and mercy. The ears of their soul are but imperfectly attuned to the voice of God, to His warnings and pleadings, to His call to better service, to greater love.

With the increase of sanctifying grace, brought by each Communion well received, a great change is effected in the soul. The beauty of the spiritual life, seen only obscurely before, will stand out now well and clearly defined. The ears of the soul will hear now, far better than before, the music of God's voice, of His grace speaking words of comfort, help, and strength. "The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist: I have not gone back" (Isa. 50:5). And thus the soul will "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

STRONGER HOPE

"For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me" (Ps. 22:4). By the great increase of sanctifying grace brought to us in Holy Communion well received, our souls are filled with a strong, abiding trust in God, for we bear within us Him Who is our strength, our protector, our life. "The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 26:1.) How can we yield to fear even though the danger is near when God is nearer? "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save" (Soph. 3:17).

"And now what is my hope? is it not the Lord?" (Ps. 38:8.) God is our hope, our only hope. Without Him we can do nothing; but, "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Why, then, should we fear, for: "Through God we shall do mightily" (Ps. 107:14)? He it is Whom we have received, Who dwells within us now. And He brings to us in generous measure the virtue of hope

shining brightly in our souls, before Whose light fear and distrust flee as mist scattered by the rising sun.

"But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). How good God is to give us so many and precious gifts, the fruit of Holy Communion. With hope come courage, strength, and peace. With increased vigor the soul goes on its journey to heaven. And now its steps are firmer, quicker, surer; its eyes are brighter, keener, stronger. It sees more clearly the protecting hand of God, guiding, guarding, leading. "For Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope" (Ps. 4:10).

GREATER LOVE

To know God is to love Him. All who are in the state of grace love God, but not all love Him in the highest degree. Holy Communion well and often received greatly increases our love for Him. The stronger our faith is, the more clearly we understand God's claim to our love, and the more strongly our hearts are drawn to Him. The closer we are to the Source of light and warmth, the more our souls experience its beneficent effects. "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke 12:49.)

"I will draw them . . . with the bands of love" (Osee 11:4). Jesus, coming to us, dwelling within us in Holy Communion, draws us to Him by the bands of His divine, infinite love. Who would not love One Who so loves us? He brings with Him the gentle yet all-powerful influence of His love, that floods our souls -with the light and warmth of an answering-love from us. So powerful is the grace to love which Jesus gives in Holy Communion, that only a heart of stone can resist it, only a heart dead to its best and highest instincts.

Where there is no heat there is no life. In the soul that but poorly responds to grace, that rarely receives Communion, life is weak and sluggish and the light of love flickers dimly. The soul that gladly, gratefully welcomes God's grace and God Himself in Holy Communion is like

a rich field in which the flowers blossom, the harvest ripens, the fruits mature. And the greatest of these fruits is the grace of an abundant answering love of the soul for its God and Guest. In time and in eternity, "They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him" (Wisd. 3:9).

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

"It is He That giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not" (Isa. 40:29). Many who possess sanctifying grace in some degree are slow and sluggish in their supernatural life and activities and soon and easily tire in the service of God. Acts of piety and devotion lose much of their appeal to them, and their prayers are less frequent and fervent. The desire for Holy Communion weakens as the warmth of their love becomes lukewarm. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot" (Apoc. 3:15).

There is no help for me in myself. But there is help for me in God. Where can we find help and strength more assuredly and more abundantly than in Holy Communion? All strength is from God, and Holy Communion gives us God Himself. "And my God is made my strength" (Isa. 49:5). Wonder not that they are spiritually weak and sluggish who seldom receive the Source of strength, who receive Holy Communion with poor, indifferent dispositions. But if they realize, "My danger is in my hands" (Esther 14:4); if they turn with all their heart to God in Holy Communion, well and often received now, their spiritual strength is restored.

"I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Spiritual strength is one of the fruits of Holy Communion, the strength to do and to accept God's will in all things. The greater the degree of sanctifying grace in the soul, the stronger is the will to seek always the one only thing worth while, to please God to the furthest limits that His grace makes possible. They who receive Communion well and often receive this increase of sanctifying grace. Its effect is shown in their lives devoted to serving and pleasing Him Who is their All. For them, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

FULLER SPIRITUAL LIFE

“My heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread” (Ps. 101:5). In a spiritual sense this is true of those who neglect Holy Communion, who have but little desire or love for the living bread that gives life to man. Their supernatural life grows weaker the longer they deny to their soul the divine food that alone can give them health and strength. They become spiritually anemic, as the blood of divine grace flows but sluggishly and scantily in the veins of their souls. Their hearts beat but a faint response to the impulse of divine grace calling them to a fuller spiritual life.

Now see the power of Holy Communion in a soul that opens wide its door to the divine Guest seeking admittance, that yields to the influence of the grace which He brings. Life and energy spring up in response. The heart of the soul beats with its proper rhythm and power; the blood of God's grace, pure and rich, flows smoothly, strongly. The spiritual life that before was stagnant and nigh to extinction now takes on the beauty, strength, and fullness that befit a soul made to the image and likeness of God, that befit the abode on earth of our Eucharistic Saviour.

“My heart is withered.” How many are compelled to acknowledge this when the things of earth which they loved more than the things of God have turned into the ashes of disappointment, and have left their hearts empty and desolate! But it is not too late. If they will turn to Him Who alone can fill their hearts, if they will bring Him often into their hearts in Holy Communion, their “youth shall be renewed like the eagle's” (Ps. 102:5). “And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season” (Ps. 1:3).

GOD PAYS OUR DEBT

There is another effect of Holy Communion, to which many, perhaps, have not given much thought, yet it certainly deserves our attention and interest. So great is the power of sanctifying grace given in one Communion devoutly received that it lessens notably the debt of temporal punish-

ment which must be paid to God's justice either in this world or in purgatory. It can even entirely wipe out that debt, leaving our souls perfect and made fit to stand before God in heaven. "Thou shalt be perfect and without spot before the Lord thy God" (Deut. 18:13).

Consider how holy and pure and perfect must be the soul that stands before God, "Who . . . inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 Tim. 6:16), Who is "clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. 103:2). "Behold, even the moon doth not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight" (Job 25:5). "Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). Holy Communion, giving to you the God of perfection, gives to you by His presence and His grace the holiness, the beauty of soul befitting one who lives with God on earth and will dwell with Him face to face forever in heaven.

This is the effect of sanctifying grace, this the fruit of Holy Communion. Jesus becomes my surety. He substitutes Himself, as it were, for me as He did in the Redemption. He pays my debt, and makes me free. Would I have God do everything for me, and I do nothing? This would make me wholly unworthy, unfit for so great a gift. God requires from me a generous, wholehearted response, giving all to Him Who gives so much to me. This response is the faith, trust, and love, the humble, grateful, persevering service that can be content with nothing less than perfection.

ACTUAL GRACES

All creation proclaims the power and wisdom of its Creator. "How great are Thy -works, O Lord? Thou hast made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with Thy riches" (Ps. 103:24). The spiritual world proclaims this truth with even greater reason; for God's grace has given to our souls more than all the riches of the earth. He has given us sanctifying grace, that raises us above the level of the earth even to the heights of heaven. He has given us the multitude of actual graces, that accompany our every step, shielding our souls from harm and filling them with spiritual riches.

In the natural order we begin life in possession of the

physical and mental faculties and powers that belong to our natures. But these need development, for they are dormant and weak. By training and exercise the awakening powers of a child are stimulated, strengthened, developed, and directed. So, in the spiritual order, the supernatural powers and faculties of the soul acquired by sanctifying grace must be developed and strengthened, to reach their full fruition. This is accomplished by the actual graces which stimulate and direct the supernatural activities of the soul, prompting, helping, guiding, and guarding them.

"Thou hast multiplied Thy wonderful works, O Lord my God; and in Thy thoughts there is no one like to Thee" (Ps. 39:6). See how wonderfully God works in our souls by the operation of actual grace, given to us in Holy Communion in many ways, in abundant measure. Actual grace is especially a fruit of Holy Communion. The more devout and the more frequent our Communions are, the more and the greater are the actual graces we receive. Every actual grace which we receive is reddened with the blood Jesus shed in the Atonement, for that is the price He paid to give us this grace.

THERE ARE MANY ACTUAL GRACES

"Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4). Many and great are the needs of our souls. At every step in our spiritual life we are confronted by the evidence of our need of God's grace in every circumstance, in every effort we put forth to avoid sin and to do His will. We are forcibly reminded of the truth, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We are brought to the realization that, "It is God Who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. 2:13). Without His grace we are helpless.

God knows far better than we how urgent and constant is our need of His grace. So great are His love and mercy that He gives us a corresponding grace for every need of our spiritual life. By these graces He guides and guards us, He protects and strengthens us, He prompts, encourages, and directs us to serve Him more and better. "Because I am yet

weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee" (*Imitation of Christ*). There are diversities of graces because there are diversities of needs.

"In Me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in Me is all hope of life and of virtue" (Ecclus. 24:25). The richest and most prolific source of actual graces is Holy Communion. Every Communion well and devoutly received increases the actual graces we need so much to serve God better, to approach nearer to perfection. In Holy Communion we receive Him Who "is able to make all grace abound in you, that ye always . . . may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). For this does Jesus come to us, that He may "fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will" (Hebr. 13:21).

OUR HELP IN TEMPTATIONS

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job 7:1). The actual graces given to us in Holy Communion help us to attain the two great objectives of the spiritual life, to avoid sin and to please God. The nearer we approach these objectives, the nearer we come to perfection. "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). We must make a definite choice between God and sin; and, having chosen God, we must faithfully adhere to that choice despite every difficulty. Many temptations will assail us, for "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

"Son, when thou comest to the service of God . . . prepare thy soul for temptations" (Ecclus. 2:1). "Because thou wast acceptable to God it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. 12:13). God permits us to be tempted, to prove our loyalty when that loyalty entails many and severe struggles. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. 11:12). At times we are tempted to give up our allegiance to God for some worldly acquisition. "All these will I give Thee if, falling down, Thou wilt adore me" (Matt. 4:9). More often we are tempted to slothfulness, indifference, coldness in serving God. "Thou hast left thy first charity" (Apoc. 2:4).

“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:24, 25). In Holy Communion we shall find that grace in its greatest profusion and strength. In Holy Communion we receive the God of all strength and help, we receive Him Who “commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm” (Matt. 8:26). Receive Him often in Holy Communion; keep Him in the tabernacle of our souls and we need not fear, “Because the Lord your God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger” (Deut. 20:4).

TEMPTATIONS FROM SATAN

“Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Temptations come from three sources, the devil, the world, and our own evil inclinations. So deadly is Satan’s hatred of souls that he will stop at nothing to drag them through the mire of sin to the depths of hell. “By the envy of the devil death came into the world” (Wisd. 2:24). The struggle is hard, “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph. 6:12).

Holy Communion is the best and strongest protection against the assaults of the devil. St. Peter Damian tells us: “The enemy is terrified when he sees the lips of Christians reddened with the divine blood.” When Jesus walked on earth the devils fled at His approach. Shall they not, then, fear to approach and to attack the soul where Jesus dwells in Holy Communion? We have been spared many a grievous assault from Satan by the saving presence of Jesus within us. Before the presence of our Eucharistic God the evil spirits tremble, and retire in confusion and fear.

Occasionally God permits the devil to tempt us even at or near the very time of Holy Communion. This He does that we may glorify Him by our faith and trust, and gain a great increase of merit. Our Lord permitted Satan to approach Him in the desert, even to tempt Him. But the devil was

powerless, and fled when Christ bade him begone. In Holy Communion Jesus tells us, "Fear not, for I am with thee" (Isa. 41:10). Why should we fear? "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31.) "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save" (Soph. 3:17).

TEMPTATIONS FROM THE WORLD

"Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Holy Communion we receive Him Who overcame the world by suffering and dying. In Holy Communion we receive with Him and from Him in abundant measure the grace to overcome the world and its allurements, that would draw us away from God, from His love and service. Holy Communion well received makes us stronger than all the power of the world that would drag us down to its own low level. "Because greater is He That is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

"Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God?" (James 4:4.) The world, that is, the spirit of the world is the source of many and grievous temptations. It sets its wares before us, riches, power, and pleasures, striving to entangle our souls in the love of these things; it strives to induce us to sell our souls for a mess of pottage. It blinds its victims who listen to its lying voice. "Thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind" (Apoc. 3:17).

The call of the world is strong and insistent, its allurements glittering and attractive, its dominion absolute and unrelenting. "For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave" (2 Pet. 2:19). How can we cope against forces so great, against enemies so subtle and resourceful, striving to draw us away from God and His service? "For what is my strength, that I can hold out?" (Job 6:11.) Holy Communion is our strength, our hope, our support against all the temptations of the world, against all its power for evil. "And they shall fight against thee, and shall not prevail; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:19).

TEMPTATIONS FROM OURSELVES

“For the imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21). Temptations from the devil and from the world come from without. They assail the will, but they cannot force it. All their power will beat in vain against the bulwark of free will, if that will refuses to yield. But within us there is an enemy more to be feared, our own perverse inclinations, our proneness to evil, our weakness in good. What the devil and the world could not do, only too often the traitor within our gates, our own weak, perverse inclinations, has accomplished.

“Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured” (James 1:14). If God come not to our help we are lost. If God be not with us, what hope have we to overcome enemies stronger than we? “If it had not been that the Lord was with us . . . perhaps they had swallowed us up alive” (Ps. 123:2, 3). But God is with us in Holy Communion; and, having Him, we are safe. “For the Lord will be at thy side, and will keep thy foot that thou be not taken” (Prov. 3:26). “God is faithful, Who will strengthen and keep you from evil” (2 Thess. 3:3).

Holy Communion gives us, or increases in us, the actual graces that curb the violence and diminish the frequency of the temptations that spring from our weakness of will and proneness to sin. It is certain that there is no storm or struggle of the soul so strong and violent that we cannot overcome it with the help of Holy Communion. The Apostles on the storm-tossed waters of the sea of Galilee were safe, for Jesus was with them. In Holy Communion Jesus is with us, and we are safe. When the tempest rages He speaks, “Peace, be still,” and all is calm.

THE KEY TO ALL GRACES

It is not enough to avoid evil, we must do good. He who loves God cannot be content simply with refraining from offending Him; he must seek to please Him, to do the things that he knows God wishes him to do, to bear willingly the things God wishes him to bear. This requires many and

powerful graces, for human nature is weak, and God did not promise that our service to Him would be easy and effortless. "Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with His sons; for what son is there whom the father doth not correct?" (Hebr. 12:7.)

God's merciful Providence is wonderfully manifest especially in the many actual graces Holy Communion gives to us. At no time are we left alone to struggle unaided against sin, to strive with only our natural strength to serve God, to practice virtue. At all times we can confidently count on God's all-powerful grace to protect, strengthen, and help us. So powerful are these actual graces that if our will fully cooperates with them there is nothing that can stop our progress in virtue, there is no spiritual difficulty that we cannot overcome, there is nothing that we cannot do or suffer for God.

"Be zealous for spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 14:1). Pray earnestly and often for a greater love of Holy Communion. Pray for a strong and impelling desire to receive as often as we can our Eucharistic God. Pray for the many actual graces that we need for our progress in virtue. Pray for the grace "to do His will with a great heart and a willing mind" (2 Mach. 1:3). Our prayers will be answered, and we will know that, "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). In Holy Communion we have the key to all graces; we have the key to the door of heaven.

GOD GIVES US THE TOOLS

"Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3). When a workman has all the material and tools that he needs, the time and strength and skill to use them well, he can accomplish the work he sets out to do. The counterpart of this is found in the spiritual life. God gives us the material and tools, the time, strength, and skill to do the work He wishes us to do, to glorify Him on earth that we may glorify Him forever after in heaven. If we accept and use well the means He puts at our disposal we shall accomplish the desired results.

Every moment of our life is a gift of God's mercy, to be

used in His service directly or indirectly. God fills our days with opportunities of pleasing Him, of doing good; each such opportunity is an actual grace. God does more; He gives us the will, the inclination to profit by these opportunities and thus enrich our spiritual life. Each such impulse or inclination is an actual grace. These graces of time, opportunity, inclination, and resolve are necessary. One thing more is needed: the co-operation of our will, "That you receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1).

Only in heaven, only when the glory of the Beatific Vision envelops and illumines our souls, shall we realize how wonderful was the stream of actual graces that on earth flowed to us from our Eucharistic God and Guest. In the fullness of that knowledge we shall wonder that we did not appreciate more the precious gift that was ours. Think of these things now, and learn that "the river of God is filled with water" (Ps. 64:10). God's desire to give us His grace is greater than our desire to receive it. The more we desire the more we will receive.

CO-OPERATION WITH ACTUAL GRACE

"For it is God Who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. 2:13). God will do His part, but we must do ours. Only the seed that fell upon good ground sprung up, only the tree well cultivated and cared for will bring forth abundant fruit. "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee" (2 Tim. 1:6). God's grace does not force our wills; both go hand in hand, and together they cannot fail. "If they shall hear and observe they shall accomplish their days in good" (Job 36:11).

"Behold I stand at the gate and knock" (Apoc. 3:20). Will we open our souls to God's grace seeking admittance? Is our desire for His grace strong and practical? If it is we will accept it gladly, gratefully, and will use it as God wishes it to be used. "Receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1). When His grace speaks to us heed it and act accordingly. "See that you refuse Him not That speaketh" (Hebr. 12:25). When it leads us in the ways of His love and service,

be obedient to its guidance and influence: "Looking diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God" (Hebr. 12:15).

"But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ" (Eph. 4:7). In Holy Communion we shall find a more abundant measure of grace than from any other source. "The desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom" (Wisd. 6:21). Our love and desire for Holy Communion will largely determine the degree of our co-operation to the actual graces of Communion. The greater that love and desire, the more we will be inclined to use well the graces which Holy Communion brings. "As, therefore, you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him" (Col. 2:6).

ACTS OF FAITH

"And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue. . . . For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Holy Communion well received increases in us sanctifying grace and, therefore, the virtue of faith. It also increases the actual graces to make many acts of faith in our hearts and also by word and act. Thus, actual grace prompting and helping us, we minister or perform in and by our faith many acts of virtue that make our lives fruitful in good.

Often and in many ways God gives us the actual graces, the opportunity, the inspiration to manifest the faith that is in us, its beauty, power, and excellence. "So let your light shine before men" (Matt. 5:16). He gives us the courage to make open and fearless profession of our faith: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the potver of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Actual grace inspires and helps us to make those outward acts of faith that edify and incite others to do likewise: "Be thou an example of the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith" (1 Tim. 4:12).

The frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion multiplies the actual graces that enrich our daily lives with many external acts of love for our faith, of fidelity to it and

its requirements. Every Communion well received is an act of faith as truly as of love. It is a proof and an expression of our firm, unquestioning belief in the words of Jesus: "The bread that I will give is My flesh" (John 6:52). "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26). Fervent and frequent Communion will give us abundantly the actual graces by which our lives become a succession of acts of faith, by which "we walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7).

ACTS OF HOPE

"Rejoicing in hope" (Rom. 12:12). With the increase of sanctifying grace in Holy Communion the virtue of hope exercises a greater influence upon our spiritual life. By the actual grace abundantly given in Holy Communion we are prompted to make many acts of hope in God, of confidence in His guidance and care in all our needs and trials. God gives us many occasions to practice the virtue of hope; He gives us the actual graces to make good and profitable use of these occasions. "His heart is ready to hope in the Lord; his heart is strengthened" (Ps. 111:7, 8).

"Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them" (Ps. 33:20). Each Holy Communion well received increases in us the actual graces to put in practice our unfailing trust that God will deliver us from all our trials: "Because after a storm Thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness" (Tob. 3:22). In pain bitter and hard to bear, in the helplessness of sickness, in loneliness, desolation, and sorrow Holy Communion will give you the grace to trust God's word, "I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him" (Ps. 90:15).

Each Holy Communion well received increases in us also the actual grace to prove our trust that God will help us bear our crosses bravely, patiently for His sake. Human nature is weak and prone to murmur and rebel. "But now the scourge is upon thee, and thou faintest. . . . Where is thy fortitude, thy patience?" (Job 4:5, 6.) Holy Communion will give us the grace to look up to Him Who alone can sustain us, to trust Him Who alone can help us. Holy Communion will

give us the grace more fully to believe that, “the Lord . . . giveth strength in the day of trouble, and knoweth them that hope in Him” (Nahum 1:7).

ACTS OF LOVE

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). Jesus’ love for us, overflowing from the infinite reservoir of His sacred Heart, fills our souls in Holy Communion with His love, and with the grace to give Him in return the answering love of our poor hearts. This love for Him must not be hidden or confined within the narrow limits of our souls, but must overflow and find expression in words and acts of love for “the God of my heart and the God That is my portion for ever” (Ps. 72:26).

The more fervent and frequent are our Communions the greater will be our love for God, and the more abundantly will be given to us the actual graces to manifest and express this love. More and more shall we experience the promptings of His grace, inspiring, directing, urging us to make acts of love for God in thought, word, and deed. More and more will our daily lives be an evidence of our deep, strong love for Him, of a love that is never satisfied with what it gives, seeking ever to give more. “Give to the most High according to what He hath given to thee” (Ecclus. 35:12).

“My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity” (2 Cor. 12:9). Wonderful indeed is the grace of God that moves our weak and sluggish wills. By the power of actual grace given to us every day we can make our lives rich beyond compare, if we use well this precious gift. Let no day pass without many acts of love from an earnest, grateful heart. For that day is lost forever whose declining sun has seen from us no act of love for Him Who so loves us. “Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not” (John 12:35).

COURAGE

“Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome, because of Him That hath loved us” (Rom. 8:35, 37). We, too, are

children of the Faith, brethren of those who were "ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God" (2 Mach. 7:2). But where is our courage in the face of danger and distress, when the service of God demands effort and sacrifice to do or to accept His will? "There is no help for me in myself" (Job 6:13); but there is help for me in God.

To do God's will requires courage, for His will often demands the renunciation of our wills, often requires us to do what human nature finds hard to do. "For the sake of the words of Thy lips I have kept hard ways" (Ps. 16:4). I find no courage in myself, but I know where to obtain it. In Holy Communion devoutly and often received God gives us the courage required "to do His will with a great heart and a willing mind" (2 Mach. 1:3). His grace makes us brave and willing to meet every demand of His service, not counting the cost.

God's service requires not only that we do His will but that we also accept His will, accept whatever He sees fit to send us. It takes great courage to say, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me" (Ps. 118:71). It is hard to say with Jesus in Gethsemani, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). It is hard to say with St. Paul, "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities" (2 Cor. 12:9). But God's grace in Holy Communion will give us the courage that we need, will enable us to say, "When I am weak, then am I powerful" (2 Cor. 12:10).

ZEAL

"With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts" (3 Kings 19:10). Is this true of us? We need to recognize how poor is our zeal for the glory of God, for our own salvation and for the salvation of the souls of others. How do we show our zeal for God's honor and glory? What have we done to extend His kingdom on earth? Our Lord Himself contrasts the zeal of the children of the world with our poor and weak efforts at our sanctification. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16:8).

“But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls” (2 Cor. 12:15). We have received much from God. Will we lock up His gifts in our hearts, or will we share them with others? “No blessing is imparted for ourselves alone, no gift is given except to share.” What have we done to share with others what God has so generously given to us? “We also believe, for which cause we speak also” (2 Cor. 4:13). We should share our faith by bringing others to know and to believe. Share our graces by bringing others to the foot of the throne of divine grace.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill” (Matt. 5:6). In Holy Communion these words will be fulfilled in us in abundant measure. Our Eucharistic God will give us the grace to hunger and thirst for the things of God, for the promotion on earth of His honor and glory, for the sanctification of our souls, and for the salvation of others. Jesus said: “I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?” (Luke 12:49.) Yes, He comes to us in Holy Communion that we may truly say: “With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts” (3 Kings 19:10).

HUMILITY

In Holy Communion we receive Him Who said: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart” (Matt. 11:29). How can we receive Him worthily, and not learn the lesson He taught and receive the grace to put that lesson in practice? One of the fruits of Holy Communion is the fuller acquisition of the virtue of humility, of the actual grace to practice that virtue in word and deed. “In a contrite heart and humble spirit let us be accepted” (Dan. 3:39). “For great is the power of God alone, and He is honoured by the humble” (Ecclus. 3:21).

The oftener we receive Jesus in Holy Communion with deep faith and love and devotion the more we imbibe His spirit, the more our life is conformed to His. “But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). And He Who dwells in us is He Whose whole life on earth was one of humility: “Taking the form of a servant . . . He humbled

Himself, becoming obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:7, 8). Wonder not, then, that "He hath given us of His spirit" (1 John 4:13), the spirit of humility. Therefore St. Paul tells us: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

No wonder that in Holy Communion Jesus gives us so abundantly the grace of humility. Is not this the Sacrament of love and humility? We need to be humble before so great a humility. In Holy Communion the God of all majesty and power humbles Himself, concealing His infinite glory under the lowly form of food. Seek then from our meek and humble Saviour this grace so pleasing to Him, so necessary for us, so fruitful in spiritual good. Seek it in Holy Communion fervently and frequently received. He wishes to give it to us even more than we wish to receive it. "Seek, and you shall find" (Matt. 7:7).

PURITY OF HEART

Another fruit of Holy Communion is the actual grace given us to live and increase in purity of heart. When fire enters into iron it permeates its whole substance, purifies it, and transforms it into a thing of beauty. So in Holy Communion God fills our souls, and gives to them a transcendent beauty, a purity of dazzling brightness, a spark as it were, of the light inaccessible in which He dwells. Where God dwells there purity, innocence, holiness must be. "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord" (Ps. 92:5). Wherefore we pray, "Create a clean heart in me, O God" (Ps. 50:12).

By Holy Communion we are brought into the closest union with God that is possible in this world. Because we are so intimately united to Him we, in a limited way and degree, live His human life. In the promise of Holy Communion Jesus said: "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58). We live by Him because of Him, by His grace because of His grace. This life which He gives us the grace to live is a life of purity, of innocence, of incorruption, the life of the clean of heart.

This is a great grace and fills a great need: "And I shall be spotless with Him" (Ps. 17:24); "For I have walked in

my innocence" (Ps. 25:1). And so in Holy Communion we come to Him "Who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 1:24). In the Old Law it was said: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord" (Isa. 52:11). This applies even more to us who carry the blessed Lord Himself. Come to Him often in Holy Communion, and receive the grace that He alone can give, "that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless" (1 Thess. 5:23).

GREATER DESIRE FOR GOD

Each Communion well received increases our desire for more. This is one of the chief fruits of Holy Communion; the oftener we receive our Lord the more we wish to receive Him. "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits. . . . They that eat Me shall yet hunger, and they that drink Me shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. 24:26, 29). Ordinary food, taken often, brings satiety; the lack of it brings desire and hunger. How different is the food of Holy Communion! Received often, the desire for it grows; received seldom if ever, the desire weakens and often dies.

It is a grave mistake to think that we can increase our desire for Communion by receiving it seldom. A sick man does not regain health by refraining from taking the remedy prescribed. The divine Physician of our souls offers us a remedy for the weakness and sluggishness of our desire. This remedy is Holy Communion well and often received. "And as I knew that . . . this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was, I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisd. 8:21). You will not beseech Him in vain; therefore, "Trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you" (1 Pet. 1:13).

So great is Jesus' love that He wishes to give Himself to us more than we wish to receive Him. Therefore, with the gift of Himself, He gives us a desire that grows with each Communion, a hunger of the soul that can be satisfied only when God fills that soul with His presence and His love. "I stretched forth my hands to Thee; my soul is as earth without water unto Thee" (Ps. 142:6); "Come, Lord Jesus" (Apoc.

22:20). He Who gave us the grace to desire Him gives the answer to that desire: "Behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee" (Zach. 2:10).

GRATITUDE TO GOD

"The Lord hath done great things for us" (Ps. 125:3). Among the fruits of Holy Communion is gratitude to God for His many gifts and especially for the gift of Himself. Holy Communion well and often received gives us a keener insight, a clearer understanding, a better appreciation of this the greatest of all God's gifts. We are so close to God in Holy Communion that our souls, responsive to His grace, are filled with adoring gratitude for the immensity of His love, "which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19), which gives so much to men.

God knows the weakness of our natures prone to tire and grow careless. He knows how much we need His grace. And so in each Communion well received He increases both our desire for Him and the gratitude with which we welcome Him into our hearts. The fire of His infinite love, touching our weak and torpid love, warms it into stronger life, into a brighter flame of humble, grateful, fervent love. Bathed in the light and the joy of Jesus' gracious presence, the soul cries out: "Now therefore, our God, we give thanks to Thee, and we praise Thy glorious name" (1 Par. 29:13).

When we are in the presence of one who is kind to us, how can we refrain from expressing our gratitude? Would we be cold, silent, and indifferent? Who has ever done for us what God has done? In Holy Communion He is really present within us. We are in close contact with the love that brought Jesus to Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, and that brings Him now to us. Have we nothing to say to Him? Open wide our hearts to the grace He gives, the grace to be grateful and to show our gratitude. "Now therefore with the whole heart and mouth praise ye Him, and bless the name of the Lord" (Ecclus. 39:41).

THE GRACE OF PERSEVERANCE

"No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back,

is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). They shall not enter the kingdom of heaven who serve God for a while, then, tiring, fall away, never to return. Our Lord said: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Human nature is weak and prone to tire. Fidelity to God's service requires a constant flow of actual graces to keep us faithful to Him each day. It requires a special grace to continue in His service every day; this is the grace of perseverance and of final perseverance.

God knows our need of this grace, for He knows that, "unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. 126:1). Unless God watch over us and guide our wavering, stumbling steps we would never reach the goal of all our hopes and efforts, the great kingdom beyond. "His dwelling is above, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27). They are the arms of our Father, guiding, guarding, helping His children who so much need His help. All this and more is implied in the grace of perseverance, without which we could not reach our journey's end.

In Holy Communion we shall find more assuredly and more abundantly the grace of perseverance. In this close union with God, the center and source of all that is true, beautiful, and good, we learn to love and desire Him more and more. We recognize more clearly and strongly how much we need His grace to serve Him better than ever before, and this not for one day but for all days. So we receive Him in Communion often and fervently, seeking from Him Who alone can give it the grace to persevere unto the end. "Confirm, O God, what Thou hast wrought in us" (Ps. 67:29).

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

NECESSITY OF PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

"FRIEND, how earnest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" (Matt. 22:12.) What would you think of a Christian coming to receive his God with no preparation, with little or no consideration of what he is about to do? If we prepare well we shall receive well. If we prepare poorly or not at all, how can we expect our Communion to be pleasing to God and fruitful to us? The commonest instinct of respect requires that to receive God into our hearts those hearts must be purified, adorned, and made ready to be the dwelling place of the great God of heaven.

"Before prayer, prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God" (Ecclus. 18:23). How much more does this apply to the reception of Holy Communion! Would we dare stand before God's throne in heaven unprepared, wholly unworthy and unfit? We know what God said of the man who came to the marriage feast not properly prepared. Would we ask God to come from heaven into our hearts when those hearts were poorer, more bleak and barren than the stable of Bethlehem? In that stable Jesus found the love of Mary and Joseph. In a heart unprepared for Communion what will He find?

Our whole lives should be a preparation for heaven; for this purpose was it given to us. How can we better prepare for heaven than by making each day a preparation for the fitting reception of the bread of life? the bread of which Jesus said: "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52)? Prepare well to receive in Communion not only the promise of eternal life but the Author of life, "For a house is prepared not for man but for God" (1 Par. 29:1).

THE JOY OF PREPARING FOR COMMUNION

"Let all that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee" (Ps. 39:17). Preparation for Communion is not a task, a burden to be borne; it is a joy of the heart, a happy, glad, eager striving of the soul to make ready for the greatest gift that soul can receive on earth, the gift of God's Real Presence. When someone dear is coming to visit us, do we find it a trying task to prepare for that visit? Rather do not our minds often revert to the thought of the happiness in store for us?

"My soul hath desired Thee in the night; yea, and with my spirit within me, in the morning early I will watch to Thee" (Isa. 26:9). Among the happiest experiences of our spiritual lives should be counted the joy of preparing for Holy Communion, looking forward to the blessed hour when He Whom we love so much will come to us. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. 117:24). As the hour draws nearer the joy of our anticipation increases, our desire for His coming grows apace, and our souls cry out, "Lord, bow down Thy heavens, and descend" (Ps. 143:5).

"I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 121:1). Greater reason have we, who have received the promise of Holy Communion, to rejoice at the things which were said to us. Jesus is coming into our houses, the houses of our hearts. With great good will, with joy and grateful eagerness we will put those houses in order, we will prepare them and adorn them to become the dwelling of the Son of God: "The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man but for God" (1 Par. 29:1).

REMOTE PREPARATION

"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man" (Eccles. 12:13). The whole purpose of life is to glorify and serve God and save our souls. "And every one that calleth upon My name, I have created him for My glory" (Isa. 43:7). As our whole lives are a preparation for the life to come, the

life with God in heaven, so should they be a preparation to receive here below the divine Guest Who comes to us in Holy Communion. And so will be fulfilled the promise: "When Christ shall appear, Who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

Remote preparation for Holy Communion is simply the habitual disposition of our wills, aided by divine grace, to conform our lives to God's will, to make our lives pleasing to Him. Our hearts must have something of the spirit of detachment that Jesus had in His life on earth and has now in Communion. On earth He possessed nothing of this world; in Communion He comes as though possessing only the appearance of bread. What less could He have? So our hearts should be detached from the love of earth, to be filled with the love of God.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). Our bodies are to be the tabernacles of our Eucharistic God; our souls are to be filled with His divine presence. Body and soul must be prepared to receive so pure and holy, so great and glorious a Guest. This preparation is the work not of a day but of a lifetime. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths" (Luke 3:4). Make straight and smooth His way into our souls; then humbly say: "Come, Lord Jesus."

NEARER PREPARATION

"My soul hath desired Thee in the night" (Isa. 26:9). It is the night before our Communion. Perhaps in the evening we had gone to confession. If we had, thank God for the grace to cleanse thoroughly the home of our hearts, that the Master may find nothing therein to displease Him. If we had not, make an act of perfect contrition for whatever venial sins may be upon our souls, so that the eve of our Communion will find us spotless before the Lord. "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart" (Ps. 23:3,4).

The thoughts we have before going to sleep influence largely our thoughts on awakening. Before going to sleep

think for a few minutes of the Communion of the morrow. An excellent practice is to read the seven verses of the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel that give us Jesus' promise of Communion. You will awake in the morning with strong and vivid impressions of the reality of Communion. Speak to God a few words of love and desire for Communion. Thus will we prepare our minds and hearts for the glorious feast of the morrow.

"With my spirit within me, in the morning early I will watch to Thee" (Isa. 26:9). In the morning at awakening and when dressing let our first thoughts be of Him Whom we will soon receive. The children of the world dwell in the thought and anticipation of the pleasures of the day. We, the children of the light, take a lesson from them. The mind and heart about to receive God can have no greater or better thought than this, God is coming to me. In a short while I shall be on my way to meet Him. He is waiting for me.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

There are many methods or ways of making the immediate preparation for Holy Communion, each one suitable to the individual appeal or devotion of the communicant. But they all must have one common factor, one purpose, and that is to give a strong, vivid realization of what Holy Communion is. They all must bring to our minds this simple yet comprehensive fact, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God, true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is coming in a few minutes into our bodies and souls, in His humanity and divinity both.

In the early days of the Church it was the custom, the expected thing, that all who assisted at Mass receive Holy Communion immediately after the Communion of the priest. The Communion of the celebrant is an integral part of the Mass; and it is eminently proper and fitting that the faithful who by their presence take part in the divine Sacrifice should also receive the divine Sacrament. What closer union can they have than to partake of the same divine Victim? "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17).

Many find, and rightly so, an excellent preparation for Communion in the prayers of the Mass. Follow the celebrant, with the aid of the Missal, in the vernacular. Read these prayers attentively and devoutly; they are too sublime, too sacred to be passed over quickly, with insufficient reflection. They tell us of God's love for us, a love that brings Him now to the poor and lowly home of our hearts. Especially at the Offertory, the Consecration, and the prayers before the Communion summon all our faith and love. Then in our hearts and with our lips say to Him: "Lord, I am not worthy." Then come to Him.

YOUR PRAYER BOOK

"All these were persevering with one mind in prayer" (Acts 1:14). A good way of making the immediate preparation for Holy Communion is to read the prayers of devotion that are suitable for one about to receive his Sacramental God. The value of this method of immediate preparation is that it provides us with thoughts and sentiments that we should have, and keeps our minds from wandering and distracting thoughts wholly out of place at so precious and holy a time. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles" (Col. 3:16).

If we use a prayer book it is essential that we read the prayers slowly, thoughtfully, and devoutly. These prayers are intended to be a help in the preparation for Communion; but they are a help only to the extent that we make them our prayers, that they express the real sentiments of our hearts. Words, after all, are only symbols or expressions of our thoughts. If therefore we do not mean what we say the words have no value. And the complaint of our Lord against the Jews may apply to us: "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8).

In prayer it is not quantity but quality that counts. One prayer of preparation for Communion well and devoutly said is far better than many poorly said. It is not necessary to read all the prayers of preparation. If one thought especially arrests our attention, dwell upon that thought, draw from it all the

spiritual good that we can. Above all, never hurry through our prayers for preparation just to read them all. "Be nothing solicitous; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

THE PRAYER BOOK OF OUR HEARTS

The highest form of prayer is contemplation. Thus do the saints and angels in heaven pray as they look upon the Beatific Vision. To a few souls on earth high in the spiritual life God gives this special favor, to become so absorbed in prayer that words and all other external expressions are unnecessary. Perhaps this may not be given to us. But we can in some little measure approach to it in our preparation for Communion, in its reception and in our thanksgiving immediately after. For the closer we come to God the more His glory shines upon us.

The best prayer book after the words of Scripture and the prayers of the Mass is the prayer book of your own hearts, "for God . . . hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:6). In our immediate preparation for Communion we should not only talk to God, we should also listen to Him. For Jesus speaks to us, not to our ears but to our hearts; "And I will speak to her heart" (Osee 2:14). If we listen our hearts will receive wonderful inspirations, which will help us to receive Him well.

If our hearts are in accord with God's will, if our minds are receptive to the inspirations of divine grace, and our wills responsive to its gentle influence, then our hearts will be like a book in which God has written wonderful things of the spiritual life. We will not be at a loss for things to say to God in our preparation for Communion, for God will fill our minds and hearts with the spiritual knowledge that He alone can give. "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me" (Wisd. 7:7).

THERE IS SO MUCH TO SAY

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). In our immediate preparation for Communion there are so many things to say to God that a bare half hour seems insufficient. Our hearts are full to overflowing, and must give expression to the emotions and thoughts that crowd one upon the other, thoughts of wonderment and awe. God is coming to me in a few minutes. He is on this altar before me now. Soon my heart will be His tabernacle. "If heaven and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Him, who am I that I should be able to build Him a house?" (2 Par. 2:6.)

"Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house" (Luke 19:5). Thoughts of wondering, grateful joy, thoughts of happiness beyond the power of words to express. Though we cannot see the splendor of His glorified humanity nor the infinite beauty of His divinity, yet He Who will be our Guest is the very beatitude of heaven. He is the Source of all happiness; and He does not come to us empty-handed: "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us; Thou hast given gladness in my heart" (Ps. 4:7).

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord. . . . Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain" (Isa. 40:3, 4). Before Jesus comes to us, tell Him that by His grace we have prepared our hearts for His coming. We have filled the valleys or empty places in our hearts by good works; we have leveled the mountains of pride and self-will that were an obstacle to His entrance into our hearts. The crooked and rough ways we have straightened and smoothed; and now our hearts are ready and waiting.

LET ALL BE DONE IN ORDER

There are so many things to tell our Lord in our preparation for His coming that we cannot say them all before each Communion. It is not well to tire our minds and hearts by too great an effort of concentration upon many thoughts and prayers. God does not require that we make our preparation

for Communion a hurried and difficult task. On the contrary, He wishes that our preparation for His coming be marked by simplicity, calmness, and order: "Let all things be done decently and according to order" (1 Cor. 14:40). There is no hurrying in heaven, neither should there be hurry in our hearts.

"Peace be to this house" (Matt. 10:12). Our Lord comes into the houses of our hearts to bring peace, calm, courage, and joy. He says to us: "Peace be to you; it is I, fear not" (Luke 24:36); "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Why, then, should we be distressed or disturbed, or insistent in multiplying unduly our prayers for preparation: Let our hearts more than our lips speak to God. "To Thee, O Lord, I turn my face, to Thee I direct my eyes" (Tob. 3:14). This is prayer.

"Submit thyself then to Him, and be at peace; and thereby thou shalt have the best fruits" (Job 22:21). To secure the best fruit from our preparation for Communion, submit our hearts to Him Who comes to dwell therein; submit them to His guidance and will, and we will find peace. There are certain acts of the mind and will that are of especial importance; they are acts of faith, humility, contrition, and desire. Dwell upon these acts, fill our minds and hearts with them. Thus will we worthily prepare for Him Who comes to give us "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7)-

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

He Whom we are about to receive is God and man. He comes to us not only as the Babe of Bethlehem, as the Child of Nazareth, not only as the Teacher and the Healer of Israel, but especially as the Victim for sin, the Saviour of the world, the Lamb of God slain in expiation for the sins of the world. Therefore does the priest say, before giving us Holy Communion: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We are about to receive the Son of God Who became man and died that we might live.

Let this thought penetrate our souls, keep it steadfastly before our minds as the moment draws near when Jesus will come to us. Look upon the Sacred Host, and see in spirit and by faith our blessed Saviour, true God and true man, Who once hung wounded, bleeding, suffering, dying on the cross for love of us. And now He comes to us with the same love that brought Him to the cross and would bring Him there again were it necessary. At the same time He is the God of all might and power, ruling heaven and all the universe by His omnipotent will.

Yes, Jesus Christ is almighty God. "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). He Who suffered and died for us, He Who in a few minutes will come to us is almighty God. When we receive Him we receive All That makes heaven what it is. "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9); "And, falling down, they adored Him" (Matt. 2:11). With the faith of the Magi adore Him, and give Him what He asks of us, our hearts: "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23:26).

LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY

Whence is this to me that my God should come to me? Who am I, what am I, that God should wish to come to me? What can He find in me to attract Him, to draw Him to me? "What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job 7:17.) With Abraham we must acknowledge, "I am dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27); and with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10). With the Baptist we must confess: "The latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose" (Mark 1:7).

In our immediate preparation for Communion say from the depths of our hearts what the priest says for us just before he gives us the Sacred Host: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof" (Matt. 8:8). It is true; we are not worthy, and God wishes us to acknowledge it. We are not worthy of the least of His mercies, for: "If any man think himself to be some thing, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3). God, knowing this, gives us

the greatest of His mercies, even Himself. "And therefore let us humble our souls before Him" (Jud. 8:16).

Humble ourselves in the dust of our unworthiness, of our nothingness; and Jesus will come, and will raise us up to the glory and the happiness of His presence. He Who is All comes to us who of ourselves are nothing. He takes possession of our bodies and souls, and fills them with His gracious company. We cannot humble ourselves enough in the presence of so astounding a truth; God is coming to us. He knows our unworthiness, how utterly unfit we are to receive Him. But His love is greater than our unworthiness. Humble ourselves before so divine a love, before so great a condescension.

CONTRITION

"Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). "Behold even the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight" (Job 25:5). Why are we so unworthy to receive our God in the homes of our hearts? It is not only because of the fathomless gulf between the finite and the Infinite; it is because we have sinned. Humbly do we acknowledge, "O God, I have so often offended You. I deserve only punishment; and You not only forgive me but come to me, and dwell in my heart so utterly unworthy of You."

We have received the sacrament of penance, and our souls are free from the guilt of mortal sin and from the venial sins of which we have repented. But the spirit of contrition should be with us still, the abiding presence of sorrow that we had ever offended the good God in any way or degree. This is the spirit that makes us acceptable to Him. "But to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little and of a contrite spirit?" (Isa. 66:2); "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart" (Ps. 33:19). To such does He desire to come.

Pure and holy should be the soul into which the God of all holiness is about to enter. In that soul should be no shadow even of venial sin, nothing that would displease in the least degree the loving, gracious Guest Who so honors

that soul by His presence. "Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). Therefore with a humble and contrite heart I pray Thee, most merciful Lord, come into my poor soul; for, "The soul that is sorrowful for the greatness of evil she hath done . . . giveth glory and justice to Thee, the Lord" (Bar. 2:18).

DESIRE

Tell Jesus of the burning desire of our souls for Him; tell Him how much we want Him, how our souls thirst for Him. "I stretched forth my hands to Thee; my soul is as earth without water unto Thee" (Ps. 142:6). "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God That is my portion for ever" (Ps. 72:25, 26). God made our hearts for Himself, and our hearts cannot have true rest or peace until He comes and takes possession of them.

Tell Him that nothing can take His place in our hearts. Ask Him to come and reign there as King and Master. "The Lord is our King, He will save us" (Isa. 33:22); "Behold thy King cometh" (John 12:15); "You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am" (John 13:13); "If I be a master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 1:6); say to Him: "I am Thine, save Thou me" (Ps. 118:94); "O Lord, for I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid: Thou hast broken my bonds" (Ps. 115:16).

"My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. 107:2). The time has come. We are about to approach the altar rail to receive Jesus into our hearts. We have prepared well for the coming of our divine Guest by our faith, humility, contrition, and desire. All that remains now is to offer Him not only our gifts but ourselves in total surrender to Him and His will. Tell Him that we wish to be His, to belong to Him, to be His property to be disposed of and used as He sees fit. Tell Him that never again will we desire anything not in conformity to His will.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

THE MASTER IS COME

“THE Master is come, and calleth for thee” (John 11:28). Yes, He is here, He is coming to us. The priest is bearing in his hand the Sacred Host, and that Sacred Host is Jesus Himself: “This is My body.” The priest places the sacred body of Jesus upon our tongues; and Jesus rests there as truly as He rested in the manger at Bethlehem on the first Christmas morning. “You are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor. 6:16). We possess Him Who is the glory and the happiness of heaven. We are the tabernacles of God, Who now dwells within our bodies and souls.

O blessed moment of Communion, when the God of heaven comes down to our poor humanity, to raise us to the greatest heights of glory that man can know on earth! O Emmanuel, God with us! What have we done to deserve so wondrous a love, so precious a gift, so great a privilege, to bear within us Him “Who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25)? Emmanuel, God with us. Words are not needed now, nor can they tell the thoughts that fill the soul; “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. 2:20).

The Sacred Host for a moment rests upon our tongues, then becomes the food of our bodies and souls: “For My flesh is meat indeed” (John 6:56). The Source of life has come to give us eternal life. “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. . . . He that eateth this bread shall live for ever” (John 6:55, 59). What can we say to Him in these moments of actual contact with our Saviour but repeat with Thomas, “My Lord and my God”? What can we do but give Him all Who gives us all?

IT IS I; FEAR NOT

Be not afraid to receive our God. He comes to us now not as our Judge but as our Saviour, our Friend, our Guest. He comes not in the light and splendor of His majesty and glory but under the humble form of food. He comes not in His justice but in His mercy, showing not His power but His goodness and kindness. He comes to draw us to Him not by the cords of fear but of love. Does He not say to us what He said to the Apostles after His resurrection: "Peace be to you; it is I, fear not" (Luke 24:36)?

We have cleansed our souls by true and deep contrition, we have adorned them by the virtues of faith, hope, and love, of humility and desire. Having thus prepared well for the coming of the Lord, what have we to fear? It is true that we are not worthy to receive the God of infinite holiness, Who "searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the thoughts of minds" (1 Par. 28:9). He knows that we are not worthy, He knows our imperfections, our failure to reach the heights of sanctity befitting one who receives his God. Yet He comes, because His love is greater than our unworthiness.

He Who comes to us is the Prince of peace, "Who delights in the peace of His servant" (Ps. 34:27). He does not wish that our hearts be troubled or afraid; but, rather, that we trust in the love that brings Him to us. "For He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), and He comes to fill our hearts with the peace that He alone can give. He comes to fill our hearts with a love for Him stronger than all fear, for "perfect charity casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). Receive Him, then, trusting in His love that bids us be of good heart and fear not.

RECEIVE HIM WITH JOY

"Sing praise and rejoice, O daughter of Sion; for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (Zach. 2:10). Let our hearts rejoice and sing the praise of the Lord, for He has come, He is waiting for us to receive Him. There is no place in our hearts notv for sadness, anxiety, or fear; there is room only for joy. For He Whom we love is come to dwell in our hearts, to make them His home.

“This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein” (Ps. 117:24).

Are we not happy when someone comes to us whom we love very much and who loves us? Who is there that loves us as God does, that can be as dear to us as our Eucharistic Saviour? Blessed be the day and the hour that bring to us the greatest good we can have in this world, the Real Presence of the incarnate God within our very hearts. “I found Him Whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go” (Cant. 3:4). O God, my heart is too little to hold the glory, the joy, the happiness Thy presence brings.

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God” (Isa. 61:10). This is the spirit in which our Sacramental Guest wishes us to receive Him, the spirit of humble, grateful, loving joy. Say, then, with Mary our Magnificat: “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. . . . Because He That is mighty hath done great things to me” (Luke 1:47, 49). What greater thing can He do for us on earth than to come to us; what greater gift can He bring than Himself? Receive Him thus with a glad and grateful heart, and we will receive Him well.

RECEIVE HIM WITH SIMPLICITY

“I know, my God, that Thou provest hearts and lovest simplicity” (1 Par. 29:17). Receiving our Lord in Holy Communion is not a task, an act requiring strenuous efforts to arouse ourselves to a strong feeling of fervor and devotion. Our Lord wishes to be received with simple but real faith and love, for which mere feeling or sensible emotion is not necessary. By God’s grace faith and love are at our command, are ours for the asking, because they are necessary. Feeling or emotion does not add to the value of our Communion, and therefore is not always given to us.

“Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it” (Luke 18:17). These words of the blessed Lord surely can be applied to those who seek God Himself. Thus does He bid us come to Him and receive Him in Holy Communion with the trustfulness, the simplicity of a child. When a loving mother calls her little

one the child runs to her and throws himself into her outstretched arms. When Jesus calls us with a love infinitely above that of any mother, we should throw ourselves into His arms, casting aside all preoccupation or fear from our apparent lack of fervor.

St. Paul, speaking of the Christians in Macedonia, says: "Their very deep poverty hath abounded unto the riches of their simplicity" (2 Cor. 8:2). Jesus, Who is now entering into our hearts, knew and knows now our spiritual poverty, He knows all the imperfections in our love and service. But that does not keep Him from coming to us, from wishing to be with us. Tell Him, then, in all simplicity that we know we are not worthy to have Him, but that we need Him, we want Him, we love Him so much that all our unworthiness will not keep us from Him.

OPEN OUR HEARTS TO HIM

"Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (Ps. 23:9, 10). These words are applied to Jesus' glorious Ascension into heaven. May they not apply in some measure to our reception of Jesus in Holy Communion? The Sacred Host upon our tongues is Jesus Himself. Open wide our hearts to Him, for He is the King of glory, the Lord of hosts, almighty God. And He comes to our poor hearts.

"Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). Into that house the King of glory has come. The splendor of His majesty and might is hidden, lest we fear to receive so great a Guest. He comes, our Highpriest and Redeemer, to share with us something of His priestly power, that we may offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Let our hearts be an altar on which we offer to Him the sacrifice of our minds and wills by faith, love, and grateful service.

The kingdom of God on earth is the hearts of men, it is our hearts; and now our Eucharistic King has come to take

possession of His kingdom. Open widely to Him the doors of our hearts. Welcome Him by every beating of those hearts, by the unspoken words of adoring love, of deep and humble joy. Now above all times “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). For now we bear in our souls and in our very bodies the great King of heaven and earth. “Let the children of Sion be joyful in their King” (Ps. 149:2). My heart, O God, is Thine.

THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

THE MOMENTS AFTER COMMUNION

HOW sacred and precious are the moments after Communion! Jesus is our Guest. His divinity and His humanity are actually within us. "This is My body." The sacramental veil is the only thing that prevents us from seeing His glorified body. What need have we of books to tell us what to say to Him when He is so near, not only before us but, in very truth, within us? In the actual presence of One Whom we love above all, our hearts will tell us what to say. "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way?" (Luke 24:32.)

There is no time to waste. Use well these precious moments; they are passing all too quickly. The Scriptures tell us of the wisdom that comes from God, "Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness" (Wisd. 8:16). How much more true is this of Jesus Whose humanity and divinity dwell within us in these priceless moments? His conversation indeed is joy and gladness: "Thy word was to me a joy and gladness of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Listen, then, to His words. "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" (Ps. 84:9).

Conversation implies both speaking and listening. God will speak to our hearts if we will listen. And He wishes us to speak to Him, with our hearts more than with our lips. He tells us what He is reputed to have said to one of His saints: "As the welcome I receive, so is the welcome I give." There are four things that should stand out prominently in our welcome to Him. They are the prayers of adoration, of love, of thanksgiving, and of petition. These prayers coming from our hearts are the welcome He desires and expects. Will we not give Him this welcome?

ADORATION

“Thomas answered, and said to Him: My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). This is all that Thomas said when the risen Saviour showed him the wounds of His hands and side, but these words meant so much. This is what we should say to Jesus, though we see not His wounds nor even His body. Adore Him as Thomas did; for Jesus’ risen body is with us now as truly as it was before Thomas then. Before this stupendous truth kneel in wondering awe, in adoring silence. Throw ourselves in spirit at His feet. Rest there until He lifts us and clasps us to His Heart.

“And falling down they adored Him; and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matt. 2:11). The faith of the Magi did not fail when they saw a tiny, helpless Babe in His mother’s arms, but falling down they adored Him. We, too, must adore Him resting now in our own breasts, though we see not even His humanity. Offer Him our gifts, the gold of love, the myrrh of penance, the frankincense of adoration. Adore Him; for in the crib of Bethlehem, on the cross of Calvary, and now in Holy Communion He is our Lord and our God.

“Adore ye Him That made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters” (Apoc. 14:7). He Who has come to us, Who even now is resting in our breasts, at the same time is seated on the throne of His glory, receiving the adoration and praise of all the court of heaven. “And they rested not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come” (Apoc. 4:8). Bending low in adoration before Him Whom we bear within us, “bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all for ever” (Dan. 3:85).

LOVE

We have just received our God. Think of Him as the little Babe of Bethlehem stretching out His arms to His mother. He is stretching out His arms to us to take Him to our hearts. The love that brought Him to the stable of Bethlehem brought Him now to us. Will we take Him to our

hearts? Think of Him on Calvary. The love that brought Him to the torment and death of the cross brought Him now to us. Will we not repay love for love? With all our souls tell Him, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21:15).

My God, I love Thee. Jesus, the Source and Center of love, is in our hearts. How can those hearts but be inflamed with a responsive fire of love for Him? "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke 12:49.) Our hearts will not need words, nor will they be at a loss to tell what our love prompts us to say to Jesus. No matter what words we use; only let our hearts speak the language of love, and every word will be a prayer most pleasing to God.

My God, I love Thee. Let this be the expression, the outpouring of a love deep and true, strong and constant. Let it not be mere emotion or feeling, but rather the complete surrender of our hearts to Him Who came to take possession of them. Real love seeks not so much the consolation, the sweetness that comes from love; it seeks rather the object of its love, and that object is not self but God, not self-will but God's will. Let this be the love we give Him, the love that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

THANKSGIVING

"The Lord hath done great things for us" (Ps. 125:3). We have received from God the greatest gift that He can give. To thank Him as we should we must clearly, steadfastly keep in mind what He has given us in Holy Communion. He has given us many graces to enrich in abundant measure our spiritual lives. He has given us far more, He has given us Himself. What more could He give? "For what have I in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. 72:25.) "Therefore I will give thanks, and praise Thee, and bless the name of the Lord" (Ecclus. 51:17).

Show the sincerity and depth of our gratitude to God for the gift of Himself and His grace. This we can do by the firm and lasting resolve to make God and His grace the

inspiration and guide, the impelling power of our whole lives and conduct. "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58). Tell Him that we will make every day and hour a continual act of thanksgiving by the good works we will do under the inspiration and the gracious impulse of His presence and His grace.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115:12.) Surely we have something to give our Lord for His great gift to us. Tell Him now what we will give Him. It is true that all creation, were it ours to give, would be too little to offer God in return for the gift we have received. But there is a gift that He wishes; and if we are truly grateful we will not refuse Him what He asks: "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23:26). Will we not gladly, gratefully give Him our hearts, our lives, our whole selves, to be His for evermore?

PETITION

"Make thy prayer before the face of the Lord" (Ecclus. 17:22). What better time is there to offer our petitions to Jesus than the precious moments during which He abides within us with His body and soul as well as with His divinity? We seem to hear His words, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (Luke 18:41.) "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7). Of course we may petition God at all times, but in Holy Communion He comes to be our Guest both as man and God. Profit then by those happy moments, and "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Pray for spiritual favors more than for temporal ones; yet pray for both, for Jesus told us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). Pray especially for the greatest of all graces, to love God more and better, to do and to accept His will in all things. Pray as He taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Pray for those dear to us and those for whom we have special reason to pray. Pray for all. "I desire . . . that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

It is a mistake to spend in petition alone all or most of our thanksgiving after Communion. There is no need of many words to tell our Lord what we wish for ourselves and for others: "For your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8). To please God and gain the greatest profit from our thanksgiving after Communion let our hearts speak in loving, intimate converse to the heart of Jesus dwelling within us. Thus will we imbibe more and more of His spirit, for "He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit" (i Cor. 6:17).

SPIRITUAL DRYNESS IN OUR THANKSGIVING

"In His hands He hideth the light, and commandeth it to come again" (Job 36:32). Not rarely in our thanksgiving after Communion, whilst still Jesus' glorified body dwells within us, our minds seem dull and dead, our hearts seem cold and unresponsive. We have no thoughts, no words, no feeling of satisfaction, of spiritual pleasure with which to greet Him. We seem to have little or no realization of the wondrous truth that the great God of heaven has made our hearts His earthly abode, and is living within us as truly as He is in heaven.

God's ways are wonderful; and who can understand them? "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). "Neither can any man say to Him: Why dost Thou so?" (Eccles. 8:4.) At the very time that Jesus permits us to suffer from involuntary distractions, from spiritual dryness, even from a sense of desolation He is filling our souls with His love, His blessing, and His grace. He wishes us to think more of the Giver than of His gifts. He wishes us to seek the God of consolation rather than the consolation of God.

"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. 12:13). Distractions and spiritual dryness when not caused by our own willful neglect or indifference are a trial from God. Like all trials well borne for His sake they enhance our merit and make us more pleasing to Him. Far from being an obstacle to receiving the abundant fruit of Holy Communion, these

trials make us more susceptible to a fuller reception of God's grace. The humiliation of them brings us to a salutary recognition of our need of His grace; and we can understand better how true are the words of the Psalmist: "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me" (Ps. 118:71).

LET NOT OUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED

"Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John 14:27). God wishes us to accept as a trial the spiritual dryness that we may experience in our thanksgiving after Communion. Do not let it discourage us, nor let our souls be disquieted or alarmed. God is with us, and all is well. He knows that these distractions, this feeling of sluggishness, almost of apathy, are not willful. He knows that we love Him, that in the depths of our souls, though we do not feel it, we give Him a glad and grateful welcome. "Let not your heart be troubled."

It is a mistake to get excited, trying to force the thoughts that will not come. Strive with moderate effort to bring our minds to think of the divine Guest Who so honors us by His presence. But do this calmly, quietly; let us not lose our peace of mind by throwing ourselves into a state of nervous, feverish activity. At such times especially it is good to use a prayer book, reading the prayers of thanksgiving slowly, attentively. Then tell Jesus how we feel; and leave the rest to Him, for "our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

"Let not your heart be troubled." Let peace and tranquility dwell within, for we have received the Prince of peace, Who comes that we may have peace, the peace that He alone can give. Despite all distraction and dryness we can always say to our divine Guest: "My God, I adore Thee, I love Thee, I thank Thee." This cry, coming from our hearts, will reach the heart of Jesus; for this is what He wishes of us above all, this is the sum of all thanksgiving. Say to Him what Thomas said: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). What better prayer is there than this?

OUR COMMUNION DAY

When Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion it is not a passing visit of only a few minutes; He comes to stay. When the appearance of bread is dissolved and destroyed by the process of digestion Jesus' human nature is no longer present. The destruction of the appearance of food under which He comes to us terminates only His bodily presence within us. In His divine nature He remains in us just as truly and really as He is present in the Sacred Host. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:57).

When we return home will we put out of our minds all further thought of Him Whom we have received? Will we close our minds and hearts to the divine Guest truly remaining with us? Will we have nothing to say to Him throughout the day? Will we act as though He were no longer with us, as though His visit were now only a memory growing dimmer with the passing hours? If we do, we little understand the real meaning and purpose of His coming, and we will lose something of the full fruit of our Communion.

"He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John 6:58). If we would live by Him, because of Him, with Him and for Him, surely we will share with Him the day with all its duties and its happenings. We will make Jesus dwelling within us our inspiration and our confidant. We will turn to Him for guidance, comfort, and help; and this not only for that one day but for every day until our next Communion. And so we will go through life, as it were, hand in hand with Jesus, until our eternal Communion with Him in heaven.

FREQUENT COMMUNION

GOD WISHES IT

IN THE first centuries of the Church the faithful needed no commandment to bid them assist at Mass when they could. It was the accepted thing, the evidence of their faith and love, the proof that they were Christians, followers of the crucified Saviour, Who offers Himself again, in a bloodless way, in the Mass. All who assisted at the Mass of the faithful received Holy Communion. In those years of great faith and love Holy Communion was the Christians' daily bread, uniting them to Him Who died for them and for Whom they were ready at any time to give up their lives.

In later centuries the vivid impressions of Jesus' life, of His sufferings and death lost something of their keenness. Faith and love, of course, remained and were real and strong amongst many. But there was needed the added incentive of God's expressed desire, to make men realize the importance and need of frequent Communion. Especially in these present days this need is great indeed. We are surrounded by an atmosphere of unbelief, of materialism: we are subjected to influences that tend to draw us away from the spiritual, to the low level of a world that knows not God.

The Catholic Church has made known to us what God wishes. It is His desire that we receive Holy Communion frequently, even every day if possible. This the Church tells us clearly in her Code of Canon Law: "The faithful are to be urged to refresh themselves frequently, even daily, with the Eucharistic Bread, in conformity with the rules laid down in the decrees of the Apostolic See. And they who assist at Mass are to be urged to communicate not merely by interior desire but also, being rightly disposed, by the Sacramental reception of the most holy Eucharist" (Canon 863).

OUR NEED OF FREQUENT COMMUNION

“Thou hast prepared their food” (Ps. 64:10). Jesus has prepared a food for our souls, a food that does what no ordinary food can do. “My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:56). Would we be satisfied with nourishing our bodies with food only occasionally? How, then, can we be satisfied with only occasional nourishment of our souls in Communion? Our souls as well as our bodies need to maintain and increase health, strength, and energy. What greater and better nourishment can the soul have than the very source of spiritual health, strength, and energy: Holy Communion? Then, receive it often, not merely occasionally.

In Holy Communion God gives Himself to us, and we give ourselves to Him. This latter is not easy, for it means the surrender of our wills to Him, it means living every day as He wishes us to live. How few of us really do this! But we can keep on trying. God offers us frequent Communion that we may try again and again to come nearer to the union of our wills to His. Each Communion well received brings us nearer to this happy goal. Each Communion well received binds us closer and closer still to Him Who is our life.

The Holy Eucharist is pre-eminently the Sacrament of love, the evidence of God's love for us, and the most powerful means of enkindling in us a return of love. This is the sacramental grace, the special grace derived from the worthy reception of this Sacrament. The oftener we receive Communion the oftener this grace is given; the soul becomes more firmly inclined to serve God as love grows stronger. It is the answer to the prayer of the priest before the Communion of the Mass: “That we may always do His will, and never be separated from Him.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR FREQUENT COMMUNION

“Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord” (Isa. 52:11). The spiritual requirements for frequent, even daily Communion are only two: freedom from mortal sin

and the proper intention. Mortal sin is an absolute bar to the reception of Holy Communion at any time: "For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wis. 1:4). How much more must they be clean who bear, not the vessels of the Lord, but the Lord God Himself Wash our souls in the sacrament of penance, then come with pure hearts to receive the God of purity.

Freedom from venial sin is not a necessary condition for the frequent or daily reception of Holy Communion. Our holy Father Pius X makes this clear in his decree on daily Communion: "Although it is very desirable that they . . . should be free from venial sin, at least from fully deliberate venial sin, so that they should have no affection for it, nevertheless it is sufficient that they should have no mortal sin, and should have a firm intention not to sin in the future." It is so easy, by God's grace, to say from our hearts before Communion: "My God, I am sorry for all my venial sins because I love Thee." Then they too are washed away.

The second requirement for frequent, even daily Communion is the proper intention. This means the desire to please God, to unite ourselves to Him, to receive the graces that will help us to become more conformable to His will. If we receive Communion frequently from mere habit or routine, from human respect or desire to appear religious in the eyes of others, or from any merely human or natural reasons with no reference to pleasing God, then the words of Pius X do not apply to us.

VAIN EXCUSES

God loves us, and wishes to come to us often. "Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock" (Apoc. 3:20). Will we keep Him waiting for days and weeks and even months? We need the help of frequent Communion to grow in holiness, to receive more and more the sacramental grace of love for Jesus, of closer union with Him. He has made it so easy for us to receive Him often; He requires so little that we may gain so much. Why, then, do we not receive Him oftener? Is it because we do not think, or do not care?

It is so easy to make excuses, to find reasons that we like to think are sufficient to keep us from frequent Communion. One of these is: "I am not worthy; I dare not ask God to come to me often, certainly not every day." Of course we are not worthy. What man who has sinned can dare think that he is worthy to receive his God? The Apostles were not worthy, nor the martyrs and confessors and virgins. How, then, can we expect to be? God knows our unworthiness, yet He wishes to come to us as often as we wish to have Him.

If we wait until we are worthy to receive our Lord in Communion we will never receive Him. But each Communion well received makes us less unworthy. We receive Holy Communion not because we are perfect but to advance on the way that leads to perfection. It is not by refraining from taking food that we become strong. It is not by keeping away from the light that we will see. St. Cyril of Alexandria tells us: "Take care; this pretended respect is only a snare of the devil, who seeks to turn you from Him Who alone can cure your maladies."

I MAKE NO PROGRESS

I make no spiritual progress; I seem to be the same despite my Communion. Is it not, then, an abuse of God's grace to receive Communion frequently when I am no better than I was before? This is another excuse some give for infrequent reception of Holy Communion. They who give this excuse, perhaps not realizing it, question the power of Holy Communion, as though the graces they received were unable to effect their spiritual progress. They fail to heed the injunction of the Apostle: "Trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you" (1 Pet. 1:13).

How do we know that frequent Communion will not greatly increase our spiritual progress? Have we tried it? And if we have, and still think that it has not helped us, let these thoughts reassure us for they are beyond question. God alone is the judge of our spiritual progress. The graces of Communion frequently received, of necessity, will help us to love Him more and to serve Him better. We may not

recognize how real this progress is, but we can be assured that if we use well the graces given, their effect is certain. "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

If it be true that, despite the frequent reception of Holy Communion, we do not make real progress in our spiritual lives, the reason is to be found not in Holy Communion but in the way we prepare for and receive it. The effect of frequent Communion is not wanting, it is we who are wanting. The words of Pius X on daily Communion are strong and clear and to the point: "Given the state of grace and right intention, it is impossible that they who communicate every day should not correct venial sins and, little by little, their affection to these sins."

I FEEL NO STRONG DESIRE

I feel no attraction, no fervent or strong desire for frequent Communion. Some offer this as a sufficient reason for abstaining from frequent Communion. This excuse is founded on a false conception of what is required for the worthy and frequent reception of Holy Communion. God does not require of us to feel the fervor and attraction for frequent Communion. Real fervor and attraction are not in our feelings and emotions, but in our will. Mere emotion or feeling has no spiritual value; nor should it be the governing motive of our conduct. The lack of it does not impair our real desire.

Our blessed Lord knows our imperfections, our weakness in spiritual things. He knows that our dispositions for the frequent reception of Communion are far from perfect, that our desires are not as strong as they could be and should be. Still He wishes us to receive Him often, even every day if possible. Every Communion well received increases our desire to receive Him again. And so, despite the absence of the feeling of attraction, our will is actually more and more inclined to the love and desire for frequent Communion. "For it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish" (Phil. 2:13).

"The river of God is filled with water" (Ps. 64:10). God's

grace, like an abundant stream, flows from His loving Heart to ours. Especially true is this in Holy Communion; for its special purpose is to draw us to Him, to unite us in closer union with Him. The oftener we receive Him the more we receive this grace, the stronger grows our desire for Him, the more completely that desire is satisfied, until we receive its perfect fruition in the eternal union with God in heaven. "If he turn his heart to Him, He shall draw his spirit and breath unto Himself" (Job 34:14).

FEAR OF ROUTINE

I am afraid to receive Communion often lest I lose the sense of its sacredness, the appreciation of what it really is, lest my Communion become a matter of routine, of mere habit. This is a false and dangerous reasoning. It fails to take into account the power of Communion, the sacramental grace that, properly used, will prevent this. Who receives Communion better, he who seldom receives or he who receives often? Who works better, he who works often or he who seldom works? "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

It is true that we may not have always the same feeling or emotion of fervor or joy that we had in the beginning. But we do not receive our Lord just to enjoy the consolations of Communion. These things are not the essential effects of Communion; and, as a matter of fact, are often absent. Their absence certainly does not imply that our Communion are not good or fruitful. It is a strange contradiction to believe that Holy Communion well received is dangerous because often received. Fear not to receive Jesus often. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3).

If ever we find that, receiving Communion often, we receive it less well the reason is to be found not in God but in us. God will do His part if we will do ours. It is not possible that Holy Communion well and often received will fail in effecting our sanctification; certainly it cannot effect our spiritual deterioration. Look, then, to ourselves. Have we been somewhat lax in our preparation for and thanksgiving after Communion? Have we sought in our Communion

our satisfaction more than God's will and grace? How have we used the graces of Communion? Receive Communion often, but receive it well, and we need not fear routine.

IT IS TOO HARD

Frequent Communion is too hard, it imposes too great a restraint upon my liberty, it demands a life of virtue that I would find very difficult of attaining. This fear that frequent Communion is a heavy burden is wholly unfounded and unworthy of one who professes to love God. Jesus said: "My yoke is sweet, and My burden light" (Matt. 11:30). It is love that makes His yoke sweet and light; and the oftener we receive the Sacrament of love, the sweeter and the lighter becomes His yoke. Frequent Communion, far from being hard, from being a restraint, makes our service to God easier, lighter, and happier.

Frequent Communion does not make new duties for us, it helps us to do our ordinary duties well. It does not add to the burdens of our lives, it sanctifies and lightens our daily lives and duties. Frequent Communion does not forbid or prevent the enjoyment of pleasures that are not evil or dangerous. St. Francis de Sales tells us: "On the day in which I have received Holy Communion I do not deprive myself of a single honest recreation."

Frequent Communion, instead of being a restraint upon our lives and liberties, increases both. Jesus said: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). He Who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), also told us: "If, therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). By receiving frequently and well Him Who "is your life" (Col. 3:4), our lives are broadened, uplifted, and made the way to eternal life. By frequent Communion well received the promise is more completely fulfilled: "The creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

A PLEA FOR FREQUENT COMMUNION

As we hope that some day Jesus will welcome us to His Heart and home in heaven, so now welcome Him in our hearts and homes in Communion; and that not once in a while but often, every day if we can. We will be glad that we had done so, when we reap the glorious fruit of frequent Communion in the eternal happiness of our Communions with Him in heaven. If now we love Him so much that we wish to have Him often, He will love us so much as to wish to have us forever. "I love them who love Me" (Prov. 8:17).

The closer we are to God now the closer we will be to Him in heaven. The more we love Him now the more He will love us forever in heaven. What better evidence of our love can we give than to prefer Him to all else, to let nothing stand between Him and us, to desire Him always? If such is our love for Jesus, then we will wish to have Him in Communion not occasionally but as often as we can. "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. 72:25.)

St. Peter said to Jesus in the Transfiguration on Thabor: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. 17:4). So should we say to Jesus: "Lord, it is good to be with You, to have You in Holy Communion." Surely if we love Him we should say this. But what kind of love is that which is satisfied with having Jesus only occasionally when we can have Him often, perhaps even every day? "Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. 9:5); "For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:56). Come as often as we can.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE

Frequent Communion is not a matter of great difficulty, requiring a degree of holiness so high that we despair of attaining it. It demands freedom from mortal sin, with the intention of pleasing God and helping our spiritual lives. "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3[^]). God has made easy the conditions for receiving Him often. It is a pity that so many fail to profit by the great grace that

it offered them at so little cost of good will and effort on their part. Do we wish to be found among those who “neglect so great salvation” (Hebr. 2:3)?

We love God. We would not be reading these meditations if we did not love Him; we would not be interested. We know something of Jesus' goodness to us. He died for us that we might live forever. He has filled our lives with His mercy, His love, and His gifts. “And Thou hast dealt with us, O Lord our God, according to all Thy goodness, and according to all that great mercy of Thine” (Bar. 2:27). So much love calls for an answering love that gives without counting the cost. Give Him what He wishes of us, a welcome in Holy Communion, not occasionally but as often as we can.

“What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?” (Ps. 115:12.) Frequent Communion well received is the answer. Give Him hearts filled with love for Him, hearts devoted to His service, hearts that are restless until they rest in Him. Make our souls and bodies His home on earth. Keep those homes spotless and pure; adorn them with the virtues so pleasing to God that He will love to dwell therein. Frequent Communion is our response to God's love. It is God's response to our love.

HOLY VIATICUM

“Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me” (Ps. 22:4). The soul is about to set out on its journey from this life to another, from time to eternity. It is about to leave the companion with which it has been so closely associated during all its life on earth, the body. It is about to go down alone into the dark valley of death. Yet it need not go alone. So good and so great is God's mercy to this trembling soul, that He will be its companion on that dreaded journey.

Would we be afraid to die, if we knew that God Himself would be with us, would stay with us, would give us the assurance of His protection? Would we not find comfort, hope, and courage in His word? “I am the Lord thy God

Who take thee by the hand, and say to thee: Fear not, I have helped thee" (Isa. 41:13). Would not our fear give place to loving trust in Him Who is with us when we fall asleep in death? Would not our faith and trust be justified when we awake in eternity and hear His words: "Have a good heart, it is I; fear ye not" (Mark 6:50)?

Viaticum means "pertaining to a journey." Holy Viaticum is the divine food of Holy Communion given to a soul for its last journey. Jesus comes to that soul, and gives it the assurance of eternal life. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:55). In the strength of this divine food the soul sets out for heaven. Its life is changed, not ended, a blessed and happy change. Why, then, should we fear to die?

THE LAST COMMUNION

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. 14:13). Blessed are they who have received in Holy Communion God Himself Who said: "O death, I will be thy death" (Osee 13:14). For, "In these the second death hath no power" (Apoc. 20:6). Blessed are they who fall asleep in the Lord, in the arms of Jesus Who comes to open their eyes to the light of heaven. Blessed are they whose last hour on earth was graced by the presence of Him Who is the beatitude of heaven, for they shall live with Him forever. How blessed and happy is our last Communion!

Death is no respecter of persons. It strikes the young, the middle aged, and the old. All must die; but when? The blessed Lord has warned us: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13). They who receive Jesus often in Holy Communion have nothing to fear. No matter when the hour comes they are prepared, for their blessed Saviour will come to them when the shadows lengthen and the night is nigh. Their night has no darkness, for the God of light is with them; "and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. 35:10).

The last Communion. What a happy ending on earth of a

life rich in grace and merit! The last of many Communion well received; each Communion a step in the ladder reaching to heaven. And now the soul is about to stand on the last step of that ladder. "Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ; may He guard thee from the malignant enemy and bring thee into eternal life. Amen." With this prayer the priest gives to this faithful soul its last Communion; and "Death is swallowed up in victory" (i Cor. 15:54). "In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: . . . but they are in peace" (Wisd. 3:2, 3).

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Spiritual Communion is an ardent desire to receive Jesus sacramentally. This desire must be sincere, for it cannot take the place of sacramental Communion. It is a real union of the soul with Jesus, but not the sacramental union of His humanity with ours, for there is not present in us the body and blood of Christ. The desire to receive Jesus spiritually when we cannot receive Him sacramentally must be prompted by firm faith and fervent love for Jesus in Holy Communion. "For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!" (Ps. 62:2.)

Spiritual Communion gives us in some measure a share in the graces of sacramental Communion. It keeps us close to Jesus, and gives to the soul peace and comfort. It strengthens our faith, our love for the Eucharistic Saviour, and makes our devotion more ardent and enduring. It helps to detach us from the love of the world, to give all our love to Him. It helps to preserve us from venial sin, and to secure remission of temporal punishment for sins forgiven. It increases our merit now and our glory in "heaven afterward.

Spiritual Communion requires but little time or effort, and is easily within the reach of all. Simply a few words of love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and of earnest desire to receive Him. An unspoken act of love and desire is sufficient. It is so easy to say: "Dear Jesus, I love You, I want You. Come to me spiritually since I cannot now receive You sacramentally." We can make a spiritual Communion at

any time; at Mass when we are not fasting, hence cannot receive sacramentally; when we visit the Blessed Sacrament; at morning and evening prayers. "My soul hath desired Thee in the night; ... in the morning early I will watch to Thee" (Isa. 26:9).

PART III

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

OUR MASS

THE CHURCH COMMANDS IT

DO WE not wonder sometimes why the Church requires us under penalty of mortal sin to assist at Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation? The Church speaks to us with the authority given to her by her divine Founder. "He that heareth you, heareth Me" (Luke 10:16); "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21); "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (Matt. 18:17). Her commands are the commands of God; disobeying the Church we disobey God. And the Church tells us that to miss Mass on the prescribed days willfully and without sufficient reason is a mortal sin.

The Church is a kind and loving mother, and does not put upon us unnecessary obligations, or burdens too heavy to carry. There must, then, be a sufficient reason for this strict obligation. There is a sufficient reason. The Church is a wise and considerate mother, guiding, guarding her children, and providing for their spiritual welfare. She knows our weakness of will, our instability, our inclination to avoid difficult things and to follow the smooth and easy path of least resistance. She knows that to slight God's gift of the Mass would be no little ingratitude for so great a gift.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass enables us to offer to God a gift surpassing the riches of all creation, a gift greater in itself than all the good works and prayers that man could offer. These things are finite, whereas the gift we offer to God in the Mass is infinite, for it is the body and blood of the living Saviour. No wonder the Church tells us that on

certain days we must offer to our God this gift. No wonder she tells us that to refuse is a grievous sin.

OUR SHARE IN THE OFFERING

Our attendance at Mass is not a mere passive seeing and hearing; it is an active and real participation in the offering of Christ's body and blood to His eternal Father. The priest by the Consecration brings the Eucharistic Saviour upon the altar. It is Jesus Who offers Himself to His Father, but He does it by the act of the priest. And in this offering, in some real but mysterious way, He associates all who are present. Recognizing this, the Church has made it a rule that at the celebration of Mass at least one person besides the priest should be present.

The Church, in the course of the Mass, reminds the faithful who are present that they have a real share in the divine Sacrifice. In the *Orate Fratres*, recited shortly before the Canon, the most solemn part of the Mass, the priest uses these words: "Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." These words tell us the wonderful privilege that is ours, to share in offering to God the Father Almighty the divine Victim of Calvary, offered now in an unbloody manner in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

"But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (i Pet. 2:9). By the Sacrifice on Calvary we were purchased, redeemed, were made a chosen generation, a holy nation. We were made a kingly priesthood, to have a share in the offering of the unbloody Sacrifice of the humanity of Christ in the Mass. This share we have through the ministry of the priest, who offers the Sacrifice for us and in our names. Assisting at Mass implies much more than many think.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE MASS

Our blessed Lord once said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12:32). This He said signifying what death He would die, the awful death of the cross. On the cross the dying Saviour

drew to Himself the repentant thief. In all aftertimes He drew to Himself unnumbered millions of souls by His suffering and death on the cross. So great is the power of love, stronger than suffering and death, stronger than sin and hell. What fear could not do, God's love has done.

In the Mass Jesus again is raised up, not now hanging in bitter agony on the cross, not now dying nor dead. He is raised up now by the hands of the priest, who brought Him upon the altar in the Consecration through the power God gave to the priests of His Church. It is His glorified humanity, incapable of suffering and death; His body and blood are not actually separated, but only in the external appearance of bread and wine. Behold Jesus in the Mass, to all outward appearance silent, helpless, as though again under the dominion of death. Who can behold Him so and not be moved?

As on the cross, so now in the Mass Jesus draws souls to Himself by the powerful cords of His divine love. Witness the adoring love with which so many faithful souls look upon Him in the Elevation. Witness their fervor and devotion when from the depths of their hearts comes forth the prayer, "My Lord and my God." Witness the many who, braving the difficulties of distance, inclement weather, fatigue, hardship, come to Him in the holy Mass, counting not the effort, but the joy and the privilege of having a share in the offering of man's greatest gift to God, the Mass.

THE MASS, GOD'S GIFT TO US

"Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders He hath done upon earth" (Ps. 45:9). "The Lord hath done great things for us; we are become joyful" (Ps. 125:3). God's spiritual gifts to man are greater far than the material, even as the soul is greater than the body. Of His spiritual gifts the Mass excels all others. Learned men of the Church tell us: "The holy Mass far surpasses in dignity all the sacraments and rites of the Church." And again: "There is nothing in holy Church so sublime and of such inestimable value as the holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

In the Mass we are permitted to assist at, to take part in

the great mystery of faith and love, the offering of the incarnate Son of God to His eternal Father. We are permitted to do what in the Old Law no one but the high priest could do, and he only once a year, to enter into the Holy of holies, to stand before the Ark of the Covenant. To us it is given to do more, to stand before the altar of the Lord, and, by the ministry of the priest, to offer the divine Victim of atonement truly present before us.

Our association with the Mass is far from being that of a mere spectator. We have a real share in the offering made by Jesus Christ Himself through the priest, His representative. The Mass is God's gift to us. Surely a more precious gift, a greater privilege and honor cannot be conceived than this. The incarnate God deigns to associate us in the Sacrifice He offers to His Father, the Sacrifice that is the renewal of the Sacrifice He once made on the cross of Calvary. To us is given a privilege the angels never had.

THE MASS, OUR GUT TO GOD

“What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy? wherewith shall I kneel before the high God?” (Mich. 6:6.) What can we give to God that is not already His? Everything that we possess we have received from Him. “What hast thou that thou hast not received?” (i Cor. 4:7.) If we offer Him ourselves we are giving Him what is already His: “Behold, all souls are Mine” (Ezech. 18:4). He wishes us to give Him all that we are and all that we have. He wishes more. And there is something more that we can give Him, something infinitely greater than our goods or ourselves, the Mass.

Give, then, to God, by our active, not merely passive, presence our share in the offering of Jesus in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. What gift could we offer as great, as precious as the gift of the incarnate Son of God? Because He Whom we offer to God is not only human but also divine, we are making an offering that in the object offered is infinite in value. One Mass gives to God more honor and glory than the adoration and praise and thanksgiving of all the faithful on earth.

St. Lawrence Justinian tells us: “It is certain that nothing

gives God greater glory than the spotless Victim of the altar, which Christ ordained to be sacrificed in order that His Church might offer praise to God." We, the children of the Church, through our representative the priest, give glory and praise and honor to God by sharing in the Sacrifice of the Mass, by assisting with our souls as well as our bodies in this sublime Offering. "What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy?" Our fervent and frequent assistance at Mass is the answer. How can we refuse Him that which would please Him so much?

THE MYSTERY OF THE MASS

A MYSTERY OF FAITH

“MANY things are shewn to thee above the understanding of men” (Ecclus. 3:25). When we assist at the divine Sacrifice of the Mass we are in the direct presence of the deepest mystery, of the most wonderful thing on earth. It is a mystery that demands strong and unquestioning faith, a faith that asks not to see, but is content to believe on God’s word. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed” (John 20:29). God has revealed the truth, the reality of this divine mystery. He requires that we bow our minds and wills in complete assent and acceptance.

“Faith is the evidence of things that appear not” (Hebr. 11:1). When we assist at Mass we perceive only what our eyes and ears tell us. No earthly power can enable us to see what really takes place. Jesus offers to His eternal Father for us His living body and blood, really present on the altar under the separate appearances of bread and wine, just as truly as once He offered His body on the cross and shed His blood to the last drop. The offering is the same, but the manner of the offering is different, for, “death shall no more have dominion over Him (Rom. 6:9).

St. John Chrysostom tells us: “O Christian, when thou seest the priest at the altar, think not that it is he who offers the Sacrifice, but believe that it is the hand of Christ, invisible to mortal sight.” He who offered Himself on the cross, now offers Himself by the ministry of the priest; the God-man consecrating His own body and blood, offering Himself to the Father for us. This surpasses the comprehension of all the hosts of heaven. Without faith it is impossible to conceive so fathomless a mystery. With faith we can believe, though we cannot grasp, the immensity of the Mass.

A MYSTERY OF LOVE

Was it not enough that for our sakes the Son of God "Emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7)? Was it not enough that Jesus suffered unspeakable torment and died on a cross for us? "Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Was it not enough that He has given us graces and privileges and honors that only God could give? He made us Christians, children of God, heirs to the kingdom of heaven. "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?" (Isa. 5:4.)

He found more to do for us. "O how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O God!" (Ps. 35:8.) On the cross Jesus paid the price of our Redemption. In the Mass He applies to us the fruit of that which it cost Him so much to gain. In the Mass Jesus offers for us all the merit of His life, His passion, and death. He does more. In some way, mysterious indeed but real, He offers Himself to His eternal Father as a sacrifice for us. It is true the sacrifice now is an unbloody one. It is equally true that the offering of Himself is as real now as it was on the cross. And all this for us.

The holy Mass is indeed a mystery of love. It is an ocean of divine mercy and goodness, of wisdom and power, the depths of which only God can fathom. "Meditate upon these things, be wholly in these things, that thy profiting may be manifest to all" (1 Tim. 4:15). The more we learn about the holy Mass the greater will grow our love for it, our desire for it. "Take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee; thou shalt be glorified by her when thou shalt embrace her" (Prov. 4:8).

IN THE MASS CHRIST IS BORN AGAIN

The Mass is the greatest marvel in the world; it is the most perfect expression and embodiment of God's infinite mercy and love for His children on earth. St. Bonaventure tells us: "The holy Mass is as full of mysteries as the ocean is of drops, as the sky is full of stars, as the courts of heaven are of angels." It is only in heaven that we shall realize the

wonders of the Mass. Yet even now, by God's grace, we can learn something of these marvels; and the more we learn the more we will admire and love.

In the Mass Jesus comes on the altar just as truly as once He came on earth in the first Christmas morning. He is born sacramentally as then He was born naturally. Would we not like to have been one of those favored souls who adored the infant Saviour in the stable of Bethlehem? A like privilege is ours whenever we assist at Mass. Pope Leo I tells us: "Every day we may be present at this happy birth, every day our eyes may behold it if we will but go to Mass; for then it is in very deed renewed."

On the first Christmas morning the angel said to the shepherds: "You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger" (Luke 2:12). In the holy Mass we, too, will find the same blessed Saviour wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the appearance of bread and wine, clothes more humble, more lowly than those that Jesus had when first He came to us. The shepherds hastened to the stable, they saw, they believed, they adored their Lord and Saviour. Will we hasten to the church, or will we go with lagging, half-unwilling steps? Will we adore Him with grateful joy?

IN THE MASS JESUS PRAYS FOR US

"He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God" (Luke 6:12). Often our blessed Lord in His life on earth spent many hours in prayer. These prayers were not for Himself but for us. Think of the God-Man praying for us. This is what Jesus does for us in the holy Mass. He prays especially for those who assist at the divine Sacrifice and for those for whom the Mass is offered. The prayers of Jesus! What prayers can be as powerful, as efficacious as these?

What do we think of one who has so little regard for Jesus' prayers for him, that he does not seek them where best they can be found? Inconvenience is a little price to pay for so good and great a gift. "If thou didst know the gift of God" (John 4:10). If we knew how priceless a privilege it is

to have the Son of God Himself pray for us to His Father, we would find a way to assist at Mass often, despite the difficulties that now deter us.

What a mystery is this! We cannot hear with our ears the earnest supplication of the divine Victim on the altar offering Himself again as truly as once He did on Calvary. Then He prayed: "Father, forgive them." On the altar He offers the selfsame prayer. St. Lawrence Justinian says: "When Christ is spiritually slain upon the altar He calls upon His heavenly Father; He shows Him His wounds, that in virtue of His earnest supplication man may escape from eternal damnation." From the altar Jesus' prayers for us move the will of God and bring down to us mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love. Truly is this a mystery of faith and love. Profit by it whilst still it is ours.

IN THE MASS CHRIST RENEWS HIS PASSION

Deeper yet grows the mystery of the Mass. Listen to the voice of the Church speaking by the infallible authority given to her by her divine Founder: "In the Divine Sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross" (Council of Trent). St. Gregory tells us: "Although Christ dies not again, yet He suffers again for us in the Sacrifice of the Mass after a mysterious and mystical manner."

St. Gregory does not tell us that Jesus in the Mass actually suffers as one in present pain and sorrow, but suffers in a mysterious and mystical manner. The body of Christ really present on the altar after the Consecration is the same body so cruelly tormented in His passion, still bearing the marks of His wounds. This body Jesus offers for us. It is as though He speaks thus to His Father: "Look upon this body in which I hung upon the cross, in 'which I suffered for mankind. Look upon My wounds, consider My death. All this I endured to save souls. For the sake of these wounds spare them."

St. Lawrence Justinian says: "When Christ is immolated on the altar He speaks to His Father, He shows Him the

marks of the wounds of His sacred body, that by His intercession we may be saved from eternal torment." When Jesus yet lived on earth He knew that many in aftertimes would not participate in the Redemption that cost Him so much to gain for them. In His boundless love He continued, and will continue until the end of time, the same divine Atonement, not now dying in torment, but offering the suffering of the cross in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE MASS RENEWS THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The Mass is the mystical renewal of the death of Christ. It is not and cannot be His actual death, for: "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9). On the cross Jesus offered Himself to His Father, giving up His life for us. In the Mass His body and blood are on the altar under the separate appearance of bread and wine. Thus does He symbolize, represent, and in a mystical way renew His death, the separation of His body and blood on the cross.

Truly is this a deep and unfathomable mystery not only of faith but of love, that God should love us so much as to offer Himself a Sacrifice for us, not once only but as often as Mass is celebrated. St. John Chrysostom tells us in his forceful way: "The Lamb of God is immolated for thee. His blood flows mystically upon the altar; the blood contained in the chalice is drawn for thy cleansing from His sacred side." Think what this means. The precious blood of Christ, shed for us on the cross, is offered again for us in the Mass.

One single drop of that most precious blood would be sufficient to redeem all mankind, to wipe out all the sins that ever stained poor fallen humanity. This priceless Treasure, the blood of the Redemption, is ours in the Sacrifice of the Mass, ours to give to God as a supreme offering to His divine justice and mercy. Pray that God will give us the grace to realize this more, to believe it more strongly, more deeply, to keep this truth more firmly fixed in our minds. Then we will account it a joy and a privilege above all things else to assist at Mass devoutly and often.

THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK

“And, taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke, and gave to them, saying: This is My body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me” (Luke 22:19). In deepest reverence, in adoring awe we enter now into the immediate presence of the tremendous mystery of the Mass. At the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist, offered the first Mass Himself in anticipation of the Sacrifice of the morrow on Calvary, and gave to His Apostles the power to do what He did.

“The bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?” (1 Cor. 10:16.) St. Paul tells the Christians at Corinth of the first Mass, in which Jesus changes the bread into His own body, then gives to the Church through the Apostles the power to do the same. This power, he tells them, the Church now uses: “The bread which we break.” We ourselves are witnesses to the exercise of this power when the priest does what Jesus did, when he brings the divine Saviour upon the altar, and, as His representative, offers Him, a Sacrifice to the eternal Father.

Behold with the eyes of faith our God truly present before us. The appearance under which He is present tells us of the Sacrifice on the cross. It does more than tell. “This is My body which is given for you.” As this body was offered for us in Sacrifice once on Calvary, so now, though in a bloodless way, it is offered for us in the Mass. The Church tells us: “The Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same” (Council of Trent). Behold the mystery of the Mass, a true sacrifice of the God-Man. In all creation can there be a mystery of faith and love like to this?

THE CHALICE WHICH WE BLESS

“This is the chalice, the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you” (Luke 22:20). These are the words of Him Who once said: “Be light made,” and light was made. Now He speaks through His priest the Avids of

Consecration, and His blood is upon the altar as though parted from His body as it was on the cross of Calvary. We who witness this mystery and miracle stand in the shadow of the cross, in the presence of the mystical separation of the body and blood of Christ. This is the Sacrifice of the Mass.

“The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ?” (i Cor. 10:16.) St. Paul was not among the twelve Apostles at the Last Supper, yet he says: “The chalice which we bless”; for this power was to abide in the Church throughout all centuries in her bishops and priests. Thus it is that the chalice upon the altar holds now the same most precious blood which Jesus once gave as the price of our Redemption, which He offers now that the fruit of the Redemption may be ours in abundant measure. How have we thanked Him for this gift?

Think what it means to be in the real presence of the blood of the divine Saviour, the blood that was shed for us in the agony in Gethsemani, in the scourging, in the crowning with thorns, in the awful crucifixion. Think of His love for us that caused this blood to be shed. What love have we to give in return? How have we shown our love for the blood that redeemed us, that so often washed away our sins, that is our only hope of heaven? Is our love strong enough to bring us to Mass as often as we can come?

THE VALUE OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

“The whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth” (Wisd. 11:23). In all the vast universe that God created there was found nothing that could be offered to Him as a sufficient and satisfactory sacrifice. Man was helpless: he had nothing worthy to offer. But, “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son” (John 3:16) and an offering was found worthy of divine acceptance. This offering was the sacred humanity of Christ, His immaculate body and blood, His most pure and perfect soul.

In the Mass is offered, through the ministry of the priest,

the humanity of Christ. The priest can truly say: "My God, I offer Thee Thy divine Son made man for us and now truly present on this altar." And with His humanity is offered all that Jesus did and endured in His human nature, His fasting and prayers, His labors and sorrows, His tears and His bloody sweat in Gethsemani, all the torments of His passion, the humiliations and the awful agony on the cross, the abandonment by His Father, the thirst, the bitter consummation, His death.

Consider how precious in God's sight is the humanity of Christ. It is the greatest and highest work of divine wisdom and omnipotence. God bestowed upon that humanity all perfection that a human nature could possess. Of so high a degree was the perfection of Christ's human nature that it excelled all creation both spiritual and material. And this is the priceless gift that is offered to the divine Trinity in the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Truly is this an offering worthy of divine acceptance. Truly in this is found God's infinite mercy, enabling us to offer Him so great a gift.

THE INFINITE VALUE OF THE MASS

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally" (Col. 2:9). In the Mass Jesus offers in sacrifice His humanity as it actually is; that means, He offers His humanity united to His divinity. The divinity of Christ is not and cannot be a victim, is not offered to God, for the divine nature is not capable of subjection or abasement. Nonetheless He Who is offered in the Mass is divine as well as human. As on the cross Jesus suffered and died as a man, so in the Mass He offers Himself as a man; yet all the while He is God.

Here we stand face to face with an impenetrable mystery, the mystery of the union of the two natures, human and divine, in the person of Jesus Christ. Two natures in one person; two natures wholly distinct and different, one finite, the other infinite. Before this mystery we bow in profound adoration, not asking how this can be but wholly trusting in God's word, our surest and our only guide. It is enough to know that God has revealed this truth. It is enough to know

that because of this truth we, poor, finite creatures, can give to God an offering of infinite worth and power, the Mass.

Because He Who as man offers Himself to God*is also God, the Offering is of infinite value. Every thought, word, and act of Jesus, every humiliation, sorrow, and pain He endured, His death on the cross, all were of infinite worth and power. All this Jesus now offers in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the re-presentation, the renewal, though not in actual suffering and death, of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Do we not see here the infinite value of the Mass? Do we make good and frequent use of the priceless Gift that is ours?

SACRIFICE

LISTEN TO THE CHURCH

DEAR God, who am I, what am I, to speak, of the tremendous mystery of the Mass? Should not I fear to speak of so deep, so sacred a mystery, of this mystery of infinite power and wisdom and love, before which the angels bow low in adoring love, in speechless wonder? Before this divine mystery from my very soul I cry out, as Jeremias did: "Ah, Lord God: behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6). Yes, in my littleness of mind and heart I am as a child, wholly unfit, unworthy to deliver Your message.

It is God's will that we should learn more of the great mystery of the Mass, that our love for it, our desire for it may grow stronger, more enduring, as the marvel of the Mass unfolds itself before our minds and hearts. We are about to enter more closely now into the mystery of the Mass, to learn what God wishes us to know of the very essence and nature of this mystery. We are about to learn, as far as our finite intellect can grasp, the answer to the question: What is the Mass?

God has given us the Church to guide us, to guard us from error, to teach us the mystery of the Mass. Trust the Church; it is an infallible guide and cannot lead us astray. For God has said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). He promised the Apostles: "The Holy Ghost . . . will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John 14:26). He gave them the assurance: "He that heareth you, heareth Me" (Luke 10:16). Listen, then, to the words of the Church, telling us what is this mystery of faith and love, the Mass.

WHAT IS THE MASS?

The Church tells us: "Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that He might leave to the Church a visible sacrifice . . . offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the species of bread and wine. He gave His own body and blood to be received by the Apostles, whom He then constituted priests of the New Testament; and He commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer them; thus the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. . . . The Sacrifice of the cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same. He Who offered Himself on the cross now offers Himself by the ministry of the priest" (Council of Trent).

God offering Himself to God. What a sacrifice is this! How sublime must that sacrifice be which is offered by God Himself! Listen to St. John Chrysostom: "The priest is only the minister; for He Who sanctifies and transforms the Victim is Christ Himself, Who at the Last Supper changed the bread into His flesh. Therefore, when you see the priest at the altar think not that it is he who offers the Sacrifice, but believe that it is the hand of Christ, invisible to mortal sight." Jesus, in an unbloody manner, repeats the Sacrifice of Calvary.

In all the world, in heaven itself, there was found one gift, only one, worthy to be offered to the infinite God. That gift was the sacred humanity of Christ, offered once on the cross, offered now in the Sacrifice of the Mass. St. Augustine says: "Christ alone was a priest in such a way as to be at the same time the victim, for He sacrificed naught else but Himself." O the love and the mercy of God, giving us the Mass, offering Himself for us, and giving us the privilege of sharing in that offering.

THE MASS IS A SACRIFICE

The Mass is a sacrifice. It is the sacrifice, excelling all others even as God is greater than man, as the infinite exceeds the finite, as eternity is greater than time. Man has offered to God many gifts, the fruits of the earth, the labor of his hands, the products of his genius. All these, though good, are not

enough to offer to the great, omnipotent God. There is only one sacrifice that we can offer to God wholly worthy of His acceptance, and that is the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Mass not only excels all other sacrifices, it is different from all others. This difference is found in Him Who offers the sacrifice and in the Victim Who is sacrificed. In all other sacrifices it is man who offers, it is some creature, living or inanimate, that is offered. In the Sacrifice of the Mass it is Jesus Christ, true God and true man, Who offers the Sacrifice through the ministry of the priest; the Victim That is sacrificed is Jesus Himself in His human nature, His own body and blood.

The sublime immolation of the God-Man, offering Himself a Victim to His Father, is accomplished by the Consecration in the Mass as truly as once it was consummated on the cross. The priest, speaking in Jesus' name and person, utters the words, "This is My body. This is My blood"; and the living Christ is on the altar as though dead. The separation of His body and blood, that was real on the cross, now in the Mass is only in outward appearance. As truly as on the cross, so now, though in a different, an unbloody manner, Jesus offers Himself a Victim for us in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

WHAT IS A SACRIFICE?

Why is it that there are found some Catholics who have so little love and devotion for the Mass, who are cold and indifferent, who either neglect to assist at Mass or attend it with little appreciation of, what they are doing, of what is taking place before them? Its appeal fails to awaken a response in them because they have so little understanding of the divine marvel of the Mass. They fail to grasp the essential truth that the Mass is a sacrifice, the stupendous truth that it is the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Incarnate Son of God.

Not everyone grasps the real meaning of sacrifice. For some it seems simply an offering made to God just as we make gifts one to another. The strict sense of sacrifice, the real or apparent destruction of the victim, appears beyond their comprehension. Hence they have but little interest in

that which they understand so little. To know what the Mass really is they must know what sacrifice really is. In this they fail, for their conception of sacrifice hardly rises above its broad and general sense.

In the broad, general sense of the word a sacrifice is merely giving up something we treasure to please another. In this sense it is frequently used in our ordinary dealings with one another. In this sense it is found both in the Old and in the New Testament: "He that doth mercy offereth sacrifice" (Ecclus. 35:4); "Do not forget to do good and to impart, for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained" (Hebr. 13:16); "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). The strict and true meaning of sacrifice, as applied to the Mass, is far more, far higher than this.

THE REAL MEANING OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifice in its strict meaning is an act of supreme worship, an offering that may be made to the Supreme Being alone. This offering is made by the real or symbolic destruction of the gift. If the gift is a living being it is slain either actually, or figuratively in a merely symbolic way. If the gift is an inanimate object it is destroyed by fire or otherwise. The essential, fundamental idea of sacrifice is the immolation, the destruction of the object that is offered. Sacrifice in its real sense always requires a victim.

This victim takes our place. The purpose of sacrifice is to acknowledge that the Supreme Being to Whom it is offered is our Lord and Master, and we are His property. Our lives, all that we are and have are His, to be disposed of as He wishes. Sacrifice is more than paying tribute, more than giving up our goods. It is the giving up of our very lives to Him, as the only fitting and sufficient acknowledgment that they belong to Him. The victim that we offer, as a substitute for ourself, enables us to give expression in more than words to our subjection and homage.

Man is naturally religious. Even the pagans, in their vague and faint conception of a Supreme Being, strive to propitiate

Him, to give Him homage by sacrifices of some kind or other. The history of mankind gives proof of this almost universal effort of man to express by sacrifice his fealty to a Supreme Being. In the Old Law God Himself commanded the Jews to offer Him sacrifices. In the New Law Jesus Christ the Son of God gave Himself to be the Victim of a perfect Sacrifice, to be offered in all countries and times, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE SACRIFICES OF THE OLD LAW

THE VALUE OF SACRIFICE

THE value and importance of sacrifice in the worship of God can be seen in man's instinctive recognition of the need of sacrifice. The great Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, tells us: "It is natural to mankind to make sacrificial offerings to God, and man is incited thereto by a natural instinct without express command. This we see in the case of Abel, Noe, Abraham, Job, and others, who offered sacrifice in obedience to the mere impulse of nature. The heathens also, simply following the light of nature, sacrificed to their idols, believing them to be true deities." These are the sacrifices of natural religion.

Supernatural religion, based on divine revelation, gives us a far clearer conception of the importance and value of sacrifice. In the Old Law God made known His will in regard to the sacrifices to be offered to Him, thus showing the great value of sacrifice in His sight. In the Book of Leviticus is given a description of the various kinds of sacrifice "which the Lord appointed to Moses in Mount Sinai, when He commanded the children of Israel that they should offer their oblations to the Lord in the desert of Sinai" (7:38).

All the sacrifices of the Old Law were but shadows, figures of another, an infinite Sacrifice, that would be offered to God in the new and better Law to come. The sacrifices of the Old Law were insufficient to pay fully our debt of worship to God, but they symbolized and prepared the way, as it were, for the complete and perfect Sacrifice that would enable us to pay our debt to God in full. When this Sacrifice would come the sacrifices of all previous times would cease to have any supernatural value. In the full light of the sun all shadows cease.

THE REASON OF SACRIFICE

It is not for us to determine how we will worship God. We must worship Him in the way that He wishes; and He has made known His will in this matter. From the beginning of the human race the divine Creator implanted in the hearts of man the recognition of sacrifice as the highest expression of worship. "Cain offered of the fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock. . . . And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings" (Gen. 4:3, 4). "And Noe . . . taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar" (Gen. 8:20).

In the Old Law God gave to Moses detailed instructions as to the manner in which sacrifices were to be offered to Him. He instituted a priesthood; Aaron and his descendants were to be the only ones permitted to offer sacrifices. These sacrifices could be offered to God alone, for priest and people, in acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion over them and of their complete subjection to Him. The offerings must be either partially or wholly destroyed; and, before being offered, were to be purified and blessed by ceremonies that He had prescribed.

Wonder not that God gave so minute and detailed instructions about the sacrifices to be offered to Him. Wonder, rather, that He deigned to accept man's poor efforts to pay the debt he owed to his God, a debt that is great indeed. It is the debt of acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion and man's subjection, the debt of atonement for sin, the debt of thanks for all God's mercies and gifts, of acknowledgment of man's utter helplessness and need, with the humble petition for divine favor and help. And thus God prepared the world for the supreme, the perfect Sacrifice that was to come.

SACRIFICE OF ADORATION AND PRAISE

"The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me" (Ps. 49:23). The chief duty of man, the greatest debt he owes to God, is to praise and glorify Him to Whom he owes his life and all

that he is and has. The very purpose of our being is to praise and glorify God; for this He made us and all things living or inanimate. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. 16:4). All the lower creation praises God. "Let the heavens and the earth praise Him" (Ps. 68:35). Shall not man, the greatest of all earthly creation, heed the injunction of the Psalmist? "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. 49:14).

Therefore did God command in the Old Law the sacrifice of adoration and praise, the burnt offering or holocaust. In this sacrifice the flesh of the victim is entirely consumed by fire, to acknowledge God's absolute dominion, for all things belong to Him, not only the life of the animal sacrificed but the lives of all men. "Behold, all souls are Mine" (Ezech. 18:4). It is an acknowledgment that we should be the victim, for our lives and His; the victim is a substitute for us. "For all that is in heaven, and in earth, is Thine. . . . Thou hast dominion over all" (1 Par. 29:11, 12).

Man needed to be reminded forcibly how helpless he is before the omnipotent hand of the Almighty, far more helpless than the victim of the sacrifice before its slayer. Thus he acknowledges in act as in word the truth of what God has said: "There is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall turn it away?" (Isa. 43:13.) Thus, in a way finite and imperfect yet acceptable to God, the Jews of old offered the sacrifice of praise, a shadow of the perfect, the infinite Sacrifice, in which the Victim is the Son of God.

SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT

"Let him do penance for his sin, and offer of the flocks an ewe lamb, or a she goat, and the priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him" (Lev. 5:5, 6, 10). Thus in the Old Law did God command the Jews to offer Him the sacrifice of atonement for sin. Even before this explicit command He had implanted in the heart of man the consciousness of the need of expiatory sacrifice for sins committed. Long before Moses the patriarch Job "offered holocausts for every one of them. For he said: Lest perhaps my sons have sinned" (Job 1:5).

Jacob, fleeing from the anger of Esau, sent presents to

him; "For he said, I will appease him with the presents that go before, and afterwards I will see him; perhaps he will be gracious to me" (Gen. 32:20). A child who has offended his parent brings some poor little gift to atone for his misdeed and to obtain pardon; and the offering is accepted. The most merciful God, far kinder than any earthly parent, looked down in pitying mercy upon the sacrifice of atonement that His people offered Him, and, forgiving their trespass, restored them to His favor.

It was but little that the Jews in the Old Law had to give, yet that little, offered in obedience, trust, and true contrition, moved the mighty will of God to pity for His sinning people. "For He is gracious and merciful . . . Who knoweth but He will return and forgive, and leave a blessing behind Him, sacrifice and libation to the Lord your God?" (Joel 2:13, 14.) Much more have we to offer God in atonement for sin. In the Sacrifice of the New Law, once on the cross and continued in the Mass, is offered to God a Victim of infinite value, the incarnate Son of God.

SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

In the book of Leviticus we are told of the peace offerings that God commanded the Jews to offer to Him. There were the sacrifices offered either in thanksgiving for favors received or in petition for favors needed. God knew how prone is man to forget, once he has received that for which he had asked. He knew the ingratitude of which His chosen people were guilty time and again. "They were filled and were made full; and they lifted up their heart, and have forgotten Me" (Osee 13:6); "They had quickly done, they forgot His works" (Ps. 105:13).

Many and great were God's mercies and gifts to His chosen people. They could never repay Him sufficiently for all that He had done for them, for all that He had given to them. "What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy? wherewith shall I kneel before the high God?" (Mich. 6:6.) "And if thou do justly, what shalt thou give Him, or what shall He receive of thy hand?" (Job 35:7.) He wishes His people, however, to express their gratitude by returning to Him at least a part

of that which they had received from Him. This they did by the peace offering or sacrifice of thanksgiving.

How merciful and condescending to His people is the great and almighty God, to desire and to accept so little in return for so much! "The oblation of the just . . . is an odor of sweetness in the sight of the most High. The sacrifice of the just is acceptable, and the Lord will not forget the memorial thereof" (Ecclus. 35:8, 9). Behold the goodness of God, giving to the Jews in the Old Law this acceptable means of expressing their gratitude. How much more are we favored, to whom it is given to offer to God in thanksgiving His own divine Son in the Sacrifice of the Mass!

SACRIFICE OF PETITION

"This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that is offered to the Lord" (Lev. 7:11). In the Scriptural sense peace signifies happiness, welfare, or prosperity. The peace offerings were sacrificed not only in thanksgiving but to propitiate God, to obtain temporal goods, to secure His protection and deliverance from dangers, and to avert calamity and harm. These were voluntary sacrifices, acceptable to God, and of frequent use among the Jews, who gained through them many blessings and were delivered from many evils.

"And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it whole for a holocaust to the Lord. . . . And it came to pass when Samuel was offering the holocaust the Philistines began the battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and terrified them, and they were overthrown before the face of Israel" (1 Kings 7:9, 10). "And the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel. . . . And David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered holocausts and peace-offerings; and the Lord became merciful to the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel" (2 Kings 24:15, 25). Holy Writ gives us many other instances of God's favor to His people gained by the sacrifice of peace offerings.

If under the Old Law a lamb sacrificed as a peace offering could gain the deliverance of the Jews from their enemy, or from sickness or any other evils, how much more in the

New Law can be effected by the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the Mass! In no way are the worth and efficacy of the peace offerings of old comparable to the value and power of the Mass, in which the Son of God offers Himself to His Father in petition for us. The former are finite at best, the latter are infinite.

THE PURPOSE OF THE OLD LAW

When Christ died on the cross the sacrifices of the Old Law were no longer of any use, for their purpose had been accomplished in the supreme Sacrifice of which they were the figure and the promise, the Sacrifice of the New Law. As in the Old Law sacrifice was the center and the highest expression of divine worship, so in the New Law, which is the fulfillment and perfection of the Old Law, sacrifice must be the center and the highest form of worship. The New Law, to be perfect and complete, must have a perfect Sacrifice perpetuated for all time.

The purpose of the Old Law with its sacrifices was to prepare the way for the New Law with the Sacrifice of the cross and its perpetuation in the Mass. The Old Law was not to be permanent, for when its purpose was accomplished then it and its sacrifices would no longer be valid. "Behold, the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Juda; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer. 31:31, 32).

The sacrifices of the Old Law, being but a shadow, a promise of the great and perfect Sacrifice to come, could not bring perfection. "For the law brought nothing to perfection, but a bringing in of a better hope" (Hebr. 7:19). That hope being fulfilled in the New Law by the perfect Sacrifice of the Mass, all former sacrifices are set aside. "There is indeed a setting aside of the former commandment (i.e., the Old Law), because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof" (Hebr. 7:18). Thank God that we live not in the promise but in its fulfillment.

THE PASSING OF THE OLD LAW

"In saying before, Sacrifices and oblations and holocausts for sin Thou wouldst not, neither are they pleasing to Thee which are offered according to the Law. Then said I: Behold I come to do Thy will, O God: He [Christ] taketh away the first that He may establish that which followeth" (Hebr. 10:8, 9). St. Paul, quoting from the thirty-ninth psalm of David, tells us of the passing of the Old Law with its priesthood and its sacrifices, to be succeeded by the New Law of grace and remission of sins "by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ" (Hebr. 10:10).

Four hundred years before the coming of our Lord Malachias prophesied God's rejection of the sacrifices of the Old Law and the advent of a new Sacrifice, a clean Oblation that would be offered to God in every place. "Who is there among you that will shut the doors and will kindle the fire on My altar gratis? I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive a gift of your hand" (Mal. 1:10). Our blessed Lord Himself tells us: "The Law and the prophets were until John [the Baptist]; from that time the kingdom of God is preached" (Luke 16:16).

Even from the beginning the Jews proved unfaithful to the Covenant. The prophets, often in vain, raised their voice in warning and reproof. The culmination of the infidelity of the Jews came when they rejected Him of Whom Moses and the prophets spoke. They rejected Him Who came to save them. They merited the reproof of Stephen: "And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One, of Whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). And so they are now a people without a priesthood, without a temple or an altar, without a sacrifice. The Old Law has passed away forever.

SACRIFICE IN THE NEW LAW

THE BIRTH OF THE NEW LAW

"BUT when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, that He might redeem them who were under the Law" (Gal. 4:4, 5). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of David: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire. . . . Burnt offering and sin offering Thou didst not require; then said I: Behold I come" (Ps. 39:7, 8). The Son of God came to do what the Old Law could never do; He came to redeem the world by a perfect Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of His own body and blood, "made of woman, made under the Law."

In the silence and darkness of a winter's night a tiny Babe was born in Bethlehem of Juda; His cradle was a manger, His home a stable cold and bleak. This Babe was almighty God, the eternal Son of the eternal Father. "The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (John 1:10). He came to give us a new life: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Through Him and because of Him, "Forgiveness of sins is preached to you; and from all the things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38).

"And Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold! the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom" (Matt. 27:50, 51). In suffering and death the New Law was born. The Sacrifice of the cross was consummated, the Sacrifice that put an end to all the sacrifices of the Old Law, and gave to the world a New Law, the Law of love and grace and life. The veil that hid the Holy of holies, where in former times had rested the Tablets of the Old Law, was rent apart, never to be restored.

THE PERFECTION OF THE NEW LAW

The New Law is perfect because it gives to God a perfect Sacrifice. This the Old Law could not do, for where can man find a sacrifice worthy to be offered to God? The sacrifices of the Old Law found their value, imperfect at best, from this alone that they were figures of the perfect Sacrifice to come. "For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come . . . can never make the comers thereunto perfect. . . . For it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away" (Hebr. 10:1, 4).

Our blessed Lord told us: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). The Old Law was a promise of something better to come. To this the prophets gave testimony when they spoke of the coming of a Redeemer Who would accomplish what no priest or sacrifice of the Old Law could accomplish, the salvation of the world. "Behold thy Saviour cometh; behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord" (Isa. 62:11, 12).

The promise of the Old Law was fulfilled when He came Who said: "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6); "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live" (John 11:25). The Old Law could not give eternal life. It could give, through its priests and prophets and its sacrifices, only the hope and the promise of another Law with another Sacrifice, that "they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebr. 9:15). "The Law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

THE NEED OF SACRIFICE IN THE NEW LAW

"Then said I: Behold I come to do Thy will, O God. . . . In the which will we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once" (Hebr. 10:9, 10). St. Paul tells us that the sacrifices of the Old Law could not atone sufficiently for

sin; there was needed a far greater atonement to placate the justice of God, there was needed a divine Victim. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me" (Hebr. 10:5). This body of the incarnate Son of God was to be offered a Victim in the Sacrifice of the cross on Calvary.

Sacrifice is the highest form of worship, and demands an acceptable offering. The more precious is the victim the more efficacious is the sacrifice and the more worthy of divine acceptance. Since the New Law is the fulfillment and perfection of the Old Law it was necessary that it have a sacrifice excelling all former sacrifices, more worthy of God's acceptance. Where can we find such a sacrifice, a victim of so great a worth that, as it were, it compels the divine acceptance? Earth cannot give such a victim; only God can, by taking human nature and offering Himself in sacrifice.

There was so much that the sacrifices of the Old Law could not accomplish. How could the offering of animals or of the fruits of the earth give to God an adequate acknowledgment of His supreme dominion over all creation, of man's complete subjection to God, of his helplessness before the almighty hand of the divine Creator? How could the blood of oxen or goats or sheep atone for sin or placate the justice of God? To do this was needed a Sacrifice infinite in value and power, a Sacrifice not of the blood of animals but of the blood of a divine Redeemer.

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

"Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power: because Thou hast created all things; and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. 4:11). Thus in heaven were offered praise and glory to God the Creator of all things. But shall not the earth also praise Him and give Him glory? In the Old Law it was said: "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. 49:14). And again: "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me" (Ps. 49:23). God deigned to accept, for the while, the sacrifices of praise in the Old Law, despite their inadequacy and imperfection.

"And every one that callth upon My name, I have created

him for My glory. . . . This people have I formed for Myself, they shall shew forth My praise" (Isa. 43:7, 21). It is the supreme duty of every human being to praise and glorify God to the full extent of his power, because he was made for this very purpose. Much more does this duty bind us in the New Law who are made children of God by grace: "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children . . . unto the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:5, 6).

God, Who is infinite in power and glory and majesty, is far beyond and above the praise of angels and of men. We are wholly incapable of giving to Him the glory that is His due. "Who shall set forth all His praises?" (Ps. 105:2.) "The praise of Him is above heaven and earth" (Ps. 148:14). But so great is the mercy of our Lord and Redeemer that He has given to us in the New Law a Sacrifice of praise infinite in value. It is His own human nature, His own body and blood, once truly sacrificed on the cross by His real death, and now truly offered in an unbloody manner in the Mass.

THE SACRIFICE OF SUBJECTION

"Shall not my soul be subject to God? for from Him is my salvation" (Ps. 61:2). God demands that we recognize and acknowledge His absolute dominion over us, our utter helplessness before Him: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me; I will kill and I will make to live, I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of My hand" (Deut. 32:39). We are His property; He can dispose of us as He wishes. "All souls are Mine" (Ezech. 18:4); "As clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand" (Jer. 18:6).

All that we have are His. What, then, can we give Him in token of our acknowledgment that He is our supreme Lord and Master, that all we are and have are His? How can we give adequate expression of our subjection to Him, of the complete surrender to Him of our lives and our possessions? There was nothing that man could give to God that was not already His. "And if thou do justly, what shalt thou give Him, or what shall He receive of thy hand?" (Job 35:7.)

The best that the Old Law could give to express man's

subjection to God, the acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion, was the burnt offering. In this sacrifice the victim was entirely destroyed, the victim taking the place of him who made the offering. In the New Law there is an infinitely better Sacrifice. The Victim Who is slain for us, Who offers His life for our lives, is the incarnate Son of God. Jesus Christ Himself is the gift of priceless value that is offered in acknowledgment of God's absolute dominion over us and of our complete subjection to Him. Jesus' life of infinite worth is given for our lives of so little worth.

THE NEED OF A PERFECT ATONEMENT

“Nor shall man redeem; he shall not give to God his ransom, nor the price of the redemption of his soul, and shall labour for ever” (Ps. 48:8, 9). Since the fall of Adam man was helpless to free himself from the yoke of his sins, to rise to the heights of supernatural life, to offer sufficient atonement to God; “And the earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity” (Gen. 6:11). “Destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known” (Ps. 13:3).

God had pity on the human race sunk in hopeless misery, and set apart one nation from all others. To this people He gave the promise of a divine Redeemer to come, Who would offer Himself as a perfect and adequate atonement, a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Through Him supernatural life would be restored, man could secure forgiveness of sins, grace to serve and please God; and the doors of heaven, inexorably closed, would be opened wide for all who wished to enter. To His chosen people God gave sacrifices, having a limited efficacy as figures of the perfect Sacrifice to come.

Man had no way of recovering the grace that Adam lost, for he had no way of offering sufficient atonement to God. All that he could do was to look to God, to seek from Him what God alone can give. Sin needs an infinite atonement, because it is an offense against an infinite Being. Hence it was necessary that God Himself should make that atonement. He could not do this in His divine nature, for that nature is incapable of abasement and suffering. So the Son of God

took upon Himself a human nature, and by His sufferings and death made a perfect and infinite atonement.

THE EGYPTIAN DARKNESS

The author of the Book of Wisdom gives us a terrible picture of the plague of darkness that God sent upon the Egyptians to force them to let the Hebrews depart from Egypt. It is also a picture of the spiritual darkness that held the world outside the Jewish nation captive and helpless. Read these words attentively; and see how they apply to all souls bound in the darkness of sin, finding no hope of escape from their awful state.

“For while the wicked thought to be able to have dominion over the holy nation, they themselves, fettered with the bonds of darkness and a long night shut up in their houses, lay there exiled from the eternal Providence. . . . And no power of fire could give them light, neither could the bright flames of the stars enlighten that horrible night. . . . But over them only was spread a heavy night, an image of that darkness which was to come upon them. But they were to themselves more grievous than the darkness” (Wisd. 17:2, 5, 20).

Down the long line of centuries God kept alive, through His chosen people, the light of faith and hope in the midst of the spiritual darkness that enveloped the world. Often His own people proved unfaithful to their trust; but always there were found some who remained steadfast and loyal. There were found fearless souls who proclaimed: “For Sion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp. . . . Behold thy Saviour cometh; behold His reward is with Him and His work before Him” (Isa. 62:1, 11). “Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I will move all nations, and the Desired of all nations shall come” (Agg. 2:7, 8).

LONGING OF MAN FOR A REDEEMER

Even when the world was at its worst God did not permit the light of hope to be utterly extinguished. Even in the day of Adam’s fall God gave the promise of a time when the

serpent's head would be crushed. This torch of hope God kept burning through the voice of His prophets, who gave expression to their longing for the coming of a Redeemer. It is the cry of souls, crying in the night, crying for the light, crying for the coming of One Who would bring them from darkness and chains into the light and freedom of a new life.

"Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth from Petra of the desert to the mount of the daughter of Sion" (Isa. 16:1). The prophet prays for the coming of the Lamb of God, the Ruler of earth and all things; for only He can give peace and light and liberty to the daughter of Sion, His chosen people. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just: let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour" (Isa. 45:8). He prays that heaven and earth may unite in bringing to us the Redeemer.

"O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down; the mountains would melt away at Thy presence" (Isa. 64:1). He, for Whose coming the prophet prays, is the very God of all power and majesty. Before His presence the angels prostrate in deepest adoration. In fear and reverence "Moses hid his face, for he durst not look at God" (Exod. 3:6). No wonder the mountains would melt at His presence. Yet, "thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour; He is poor, and riding upon an ass" (Zach. 9:9). The Saviour of the world will come in meekness and poverty, "that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

PROPHECIES OF THE REDEEMER TO COME

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death light is risen" (Isa. 9:2). Thus spoke Isaiah, prophesying the coming of the Light of the world, the Redeemer Who would give light and life to those who dwelt in the shadow of death. God saw fit to take forty centuries and more to prepare the world for the coming of the Redeemer Who would save mankind by the Sacrifice of Himself. The prophets foretold many things of Him Whose work was greater than creation itself.

Through His prophets God revealed Who the Redeemer is, God Himself Who would become man that He might offer Himself a Victim for sin. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel [i.e., God with us]; For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us; . . . and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 7:14; 9:6). "This is our God, and there shall no other be accounted of in comparison of Him. . . . Afterwards He was seen upon earth, and conversed with men" (Bar. 3:36, 38).

The place of the Saviour's birth and the time of His public life were foretold. "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me That is to be the Ruler in Israel; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (Mich. 5:2). "From the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (Dan. 9:25). These are weeks of years, 6g in all, or 483 years. It was after this period that Jesus began His public life.

PROPHECIES OF THE REDEMPTION

"Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man" (Luke 18:31). The prophets, especially David and Isaias, have given us a picture of how the Redemption was to be accomplished. It is a terrible picture of the awful price the blessed Saviour paid to divine justice, to redeem the world, to save our souls from sin and its inevitable punishment, eternal death.

Listen to the words of David, spoken a thousand years before the events they foretell. "I am a worm, and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him: let Him save Him, seeing He delighteth in Him. . . . They have dug My hands and feet. They have numbered all My bones. . . . They parted My gar-

meats amongst them, and upon My vesture they cast lots” (Ps. 21:7-9, 17, 18, 19). “They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink” (Ps. 68:22).

Seven hundred years before it came to pass Isaias prophesied: “From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein; wounds and bruises and swelling sores: they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil” (1:6). “Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. . . . And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 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” (Isa. 53:4-7)-

THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

WITHOUT THE CROSS THERE IS NO MASS

TO KNOW what the Sacrifice of the Mass is, we must know what the Sacrifice of the cross is. To enter into any, even partial, realization of the tremendous mystery of faith and love that the Mass is, we must try to enter more closely into the awful reality of the cross. As truly as Mary and John and the Magdalen stood beneath the cross of Christ and beheld the dying agony of the Son of God made man, so truly in the Mass are we in the real presence of the same divine Victim, continuing in an unbloody yet real manner the very same Sacrifice of Himself.

The Catholic Church, speaking with the infallible authority given to her by her divine Founder, teaches us: "In this Divine Sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass the same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross" (Council of Trent). Not only is He present in the Mass but also He is immolated, offered as a sacrifice, though only mystically, not actually, slain. All the reality, the meaning, and the value of the Mass come from the cross.

See how important, how necessary it is to think more deeply and often of the Sacrifice of the cross, that we may know what it really means to assist at Mass. Once we have looked into the mysterious depths of the awful Sacrifice of Calvary, we will never assist at Mass indifferently or indevoutly. Once we have stood at the foot of the cross, once we have grasped a little of the tremendous truth that the Man Whose awful torment and death we have witnessed is God Himself, we can never be cold or unmoved when we assist at the real, though unbloody, repetition of this Sacrifice.

THE REALITY OF THE CROSS

The Sacrifice of the cross is a terrible reality. Most of us have only a faint, vague conception of the awful price Jesus paid for our Redemption. We know that He is God, the Second Person of the divine Trinity; but we fail fully to grasp all that is implied in the fact that He became a human being, capable of suffering, sorrow, and death. We fail to recognize in its full and frightful extent the enormity of the sufferings that He endured.

“From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein, wounds and bruises and swelling sores” (Isa. 1:6). Some people have a confused idea that the divinity of Jesus spared Him something of the intensity of His suffering, lessened in some way the bitterness of His chalice. This is not true. From the boundless depths of Jesus' love for us He chose to drink the chalice, unaided by the consolations of His divinity. To His pain, humiliation, and sorrow was added a bitter loneliness: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46.)

“Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour” (John 12:27). Jesus spoke these words in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Thursday night, in the darkness of Gethsemani, again He spoke: “My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). That which He dreaded so much, became a fearful reality. No words can tell the depths of His agony as He hung nailed to the cross, a Victim sacrificed for our sins. This is the reality of the cross.

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

On the cross it is Jesus Who offers the Victim, and it is He Who is the Victim. He endured the torments and death of the cross not by necessity but of His own choice, because He loved us so much: “I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself” (John 10:17, 18). Jesus said to Pilate: “Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above” (John

19:11). When they mocked Him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save" (Matt. 27:42), the dying Saviour remained on the cross.

The perfect sacrifice is that which offers a perfect victim. The priests of the Old Law sacrificed only the life of animals or the fruits of the earth. Jesus gave far more than these, He gave more than all that earth could give. The Victim that He offered was the most precious life of all, less only than the divine life which cannot be a victim, which cannot suffer or die. The humanity of Christ, God's masterpiece of creation, is the only Victim wholly worthy of divine acceptance, the only Victim which can fulfill perfectly all the purposes of sacrifice.

"As Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The boundless love of Christ for souls, for our souls, impelled Him to make the Sacrifice of perfect charity, giving all for those who so little deserved His love. "But God commendeth His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, 9). Christ died for us, yes, for us! And we, will we not live for Him?

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). At the moment of the Incarnation the Second Person of the divine Trinity was united to the humanity of Christ, the Babe in Mary's womb was both human and divine. Jesus suffering and dying on the cross is both Man and God. As Man He suffered and died, a Sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. His divinity, though not sharing in His suffering and death, gave to this Sacrifice of the humanity of Christ an infinite value.

Because Jesus is God as well as Man all His acts are of infinite worth and power. One drop of His most precious blood is ransom enough for a million worlds and more. The finite bears no relation, no comparison to the infinite, so

utter is the gulf between. The Sacrifice of a Person Who is divine as well as human has infinitely more value than anything and everything less than God. It gives more honor and glory to God than He receives from the adoration and homage and praise of all the court of heaven.

Behold the Victim of the Sacrifice! From His hands and feet nailed to the cross and from His thorn-crowned head the blood trickles down, reddening the wood of the cross and the earth around. Where is the glory of His divinity now? So completely is it hidden that the eyes of men can see only a Man dying in untold agony, only a Man dead on the cross. This Man is almighty God; and because He is God His Sacrifice has done more than the mighty fiat of creation. It has given to God what only God can give, a supreme and sufficient Sacrifice.

THE NEED OF A PERFECT ATONEMENT

“Destruction is thy own, O Israel, thy help is only in Me” (Osee 13:9). Man could sin, but in himself could find no escape from sin. He could put the yoke upon his shoulders, but could not take it away. He could turn away from God, but could not come back. He could climb down from his high estate of grace and supernatural life, but could not climb up again. Helpless and hopeless, man, made for heaven but renouncing his heritage, could never recover what he had lost. This is what would have been the state of man if there had been no Redemption.

“But your iniquities have divided between you and your God” (Isa. 59:2). This wall of division not all the resources of earth could tear down. “All iniquity is like a two-edged sword, there is no remedy for the wound thereof” (Ecclus. 21:4). Wounded unto death, sin has left man poor, weak, helpless; “his heart is ashes, and his hope vain earth, and his life more base than clay” (Wisd. 15:10). From the depths of a sin-laden world in sorrow and misery comes a cry almost of despair: “Hast Thou made all the children of men in vain?” (Ps. 88:48.) God heard this cry, and answered it.

God made man to glorify his Creator, to serve Him, and to live with Him forever in heaven. When sin, like a fatal

pestilence, killed the life of innocence and happiness in man, seeing his pitiful and helpless condition, God was moved to mercy. Because man had no way of giving adequate atonement for so great an evil as sin, God offered Himself as a Victim to divine justice, to restore to man what sin had taken away, the friendship of God, innocence, and supernatural life: "Through Him [Christ] to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20).

THE CROSS: A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT

"The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11.) He is drinking it now; Jesus, "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice! by Whose stripes you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). He is drinking it now. Jesus' hands and feet are nailed to the cross. He is raised up on it, and hangs against the darkening skies, helpless, rigid on His bed of pain. "Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised" (Isa. 53:3).

When Cain killed his brother Abel God said: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth" (Gen. 4:10). Again God said: "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is multiplied, and their sin is become exceedingly grievous" (Gen. 18:20). The sins of the world, like a fearful cry, rise up from the dark depths of souls gone astray from the path of faith and love, provoking the just anger of God. "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there. . . . And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:33, 34).

Which of these two cries is the stronger, that from a sinning world deserving adequate punishment, or that from the crucified Saviour, offering His suffering and death in atonement? The one calls for justice, the other for mercy. On the cross "mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. 84:11). Behold the perfect, the supreme Sacrifice of atonement, the God-Man in torment and death,

paying the debt of a sinful world. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works" (Titus 2:14).

THE CROSS: A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

On the cross our blessed Lord and Saviour offered His sufferings and sorrows, His bitter death as a Sacrifice of praise to the divine Trinity on behalf of and in the name of the whole human race. Because Jesus Christ is God He alone knows the full measure of adoration, praise, glory, and honor that is due to God from His creatures. He alone can pay this debt in full. He alone can praise and glorify God as God deserves to be praised and glorified. God alone can give a Sacrifice of infinite value and power.

The divine nature of the blessed Saviour is incapable of subjection or debasement, of suffering or death. In His divine nature Jesus could not offer Himself as a Sacrifice. To do this it was necessary that He assume a lesser nature, of course still being God. Therefore, "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8). Jesus, suffering and dying as a Man, offered a Sacrifice of praise that is infinite because He is God.

All the glory that God received from the praises of the angelic choirs, all the honor that just men have given Him by living for Him, suffering for Him, dying for Him, all this falls far short of the praise that is His due. All this is as nothing compared to the glory that God received when Jesus offered Himself in Sacrifice on the cross. One moan of pain, one drop of blood, one bruise or wound, one moment of anguish, one labored, gasping breath, one last dying shudder give honor and praise and glory to God beyond all that angel or man can give.

THE CROSS: A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

On the cross of Calvary our blessed Saviour offered His body and soul to endure pain and sorrow, and gave up His

life, all as a Sacrifice of thanksgiving to the divine Trinity for us. What an act of thanksgiving is this! The most fearful suffering that a human body could endure, untold agony of soul as He hung on the cross with sin and sorrow His only companions, the sins of all the world that burdened His soul with a grief that only the God-Man could know and bear. All this Jesus endured to give thanks to God for us.

If the great God had but once deigned to look kindly upon us poor worms of the earth, to speak only one kind word, we could never be grateful enough to Him. But what has He done for us? He made us, endowed us with wonderful gifts, He preserves us from many dangers, He redeemed us by suffering and dying for us, and made us His children and heirs of heaven. For so much love we could never make an adequate return. Jesus puts in our hands the infinite thanksgiving of the Sacrifice of the cross, to pay our debt of thanks that all eternity could not otherwise pay.

Shall we let Jesus pay all our debt of thanks, and that at so fearful a cost to Him? Shall we look on indifferently while He suffers so much, while we suffer and do so little? Have we no heart, no understanding? It is our debt He is paying; but what about our debt to Him for paying our debt? Most merciful and loving Saviour, let my whole life be an act of thanksgiving to You for the infinite love that gave me, at so great a cost to You, the power to offer a worthy thanksgiving to God.

THE CROSS: A SACRIFICE OF PETITION

“Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid” (Hebr. 4:16). The throne of grace is on the hill of Calvary; it is a cross, and on that cross hangs in quivering agony the body of the dying Christ. Hidden is the glory of His divinity; only pain, sorrow, humiliation, death are visible. Yet from that cross come happiness, strength, glory, and eternal life, born of the agony and death of the God-Man, offering Himself a Sacrifice of petition for us.

Most loving Saviour, hard and bitter indeed was Your

earthly throne. To You it brought only agony of body and soul; to You it brought death. But to us it brought hope and grace and life. By Your torment and death on the cross You opened an infinite reservoir, a treasure house of merit and grace to a fallen world. You opened heaven to a helpless and despairing world; You gave light where before was darkness, life where before was death. "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.)

The Sacrifice of petition that Jesus on the cross offered to His eternal Father has unlimited power to obtain all that we need and seek. There is no grace, no gift which it cannot obtain for us. Then go in confidence to the throne of grace, to the cross of Christ. Look upon our dying Saviour. He is paying the price; He is purchasing for us the graces, the gifts we need so much. Surely the price He paid is enough to fill heaven with glorified souls, to fill the earth with saints, to fill our souls with all faith and hope and love.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

"He hath appeared for the destruction of sin, by the Sacrifice of Himself" (Hebr. 9:26). The power of the Sacrifice of the cross is supreme, it has accomplished that which nothing else in heaven or on earth could do. It freed us from the yoke of sin, from the punishment of sin, eternal death, reconciled the human race to God, and restored supernatural life with all its gifts. "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present wicked world" (Gal. 1:4). "It hath well pleased the Father . . . through Him [Christ] to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:19, 20).

The power of the cross is a divine mystery whose depths no mortal mind can penetrate, "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom. 11:33.) By the cross power comes from weakness, glory from shame, life from death. Five days before His passion Jesus said: "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to

Myself" (John 12:31, 32). O divine power of the cross, the source of all blessings, the cause of all graces, the fountain of eternal life!

What a mystery is this, life from death! "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). For this cause Jesus came to the cross; for this He died, that we might live. "And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). He Who is the Author of life, Who is life itself died on the cross, that they who were dead in sin may be raised to life. Jesus on the cross has fulfilled the prophecy: "I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy death" (Osee 13:14).

THE MERCY OF THE CROSS

The cross had no mercy for Jesus. It spared Him no torment nor sorrow nor humiliation that human nature could endure; and when there was nothing left to suffer, it killed Him. The cross was a hard and bitter bed, harder far than the feeding trough or manger that was His bed in Bethlehem on the first Christmas night. But Jesus came into the world not to do His own will, He came to do the will of His Father, and His Father's will led Him to the cross: "Who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebr. 12:2).

All the mercy of the cross was for us. And few there are that grasp how great its mercy is, how much we owe to the cross, how hapless and hopeless would be our lot were it not for the mercy of the cross. If Jesus had not died for us the wall of sin that separated us from God could never be broken down. But He Who hung on the cross blotted out "the handwriting of the decree that was against us. . . . And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

Does it not seem strange that we take as a matter of course the mercy of the cross, the graces and blessings it brought to us, all that it has done for us? Is it not strange how little we think of the fearful price that Jesus paid to give us the mercy of the cross? "Forget not the kindness of

thy Surety; for He hath given His life for thee" (Ecclus. 29:19). Thank Him every day with all our hearts, "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice; by Whose stripes you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). Behold our Saviour in utter helplessness, in humiliation and sorrow and pain, dying the shameful death of crucifixion, the death reserved to slaves and hardened criminals. A scandal to the Jews, foolishness to the pagan world, yes, and to unbelievers even now. But to the elect, to those who believe, the cross is "wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

How differently will the cross appear when God will reveal its glory in His second coming, this time to judge the world. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty" (Matt. 24:30); "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him" (Apoc. 1:7). Woe to them who despised the cross, who would not accept its mercy; now they will be overwhelmed by its glory and power. "What shall be the end of them that believe not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17.)

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). A true follower of Christ will see beyond the sorrows of the cross, beyond its ignominy, its pain and death. He will see the glory of the life that comes from death, the glory of the happiness that comes from sorrow, the glory of the eternal light that comes from the darkness that spread over Calvary's summit -when Jesus bowed His head and died. He will see the glory of the cross.

THE CROSS: OUR ONLY HOPE

The cross of Christ is our only hope. It is the only answer to the mystery of life and death. It is the only answer to the mystery of suffering. Of itself our suffering is of no spiritual worth; the cross alone can give to it a spiritual value and power. United to the suffering of Christ and because of His suffering, our pain and sorrow are turned into a blessing, and lead not to death but to eternal life. Only the cross of Christ can work so great a miracle as to bring power, strength, and triumph out of pain, weakness, and failure.

From the tree of Eden death came into the world; from the tree of Calvary came life: "And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). Death is the inevitable punishment of sin: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). From this death only the cross of Christ can save us. United to His death, and because of it, the death of our body is no longer a curse, it is the gate that opens upon eternal life. The cross is the only answer to the mystery of death; it is our only hope of life.

"Hail, holy cross, our only hope; in the glory of thy triumph give grace to the just, grant pardon to sinners." Thus does the Church pray in one of her hymns to the holy cross. Cling to the cross, for it is our only hope. From it came pain, sorrow, and death to the Saviour; from it come strength, happiness, and life to us. Keep close to it; for only when we are near to the cross are we safe. Without the cross there is no salvation, nor means of grace, nor escape from sin. Without the cross there is no Mass.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

THE CROSS AND THE MASS

"THE Sacrifice of the cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same. He Who offered Himself on the cross now offers Himself by the ministry of the priest" (Council of Trent). In this are found the whole meaning and nature and value of the Mass. It is essentially and actually the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, only the manner of the offering is different. It is necessary that we keep before us clearly this fundamental truth, otherwise we will fail to grasp even a little of the real meaning of the Mass.

The Church tells us definitely: "In this Divine Sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass the same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross" (Council of Trent). St. Cyprian says: "The Sacrifice we offer is the passion of Christ." Theodoret tells us: "We offer no other sacrifice but that which was offered on the cross." The Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely a memorial of the Sacrifice once offered on the cross, it is one and the same, and always will be the same.

Listen to the words of St. Augustine: "The blood of Christ is shed for sinners in holy Mass." Hear the words of St. John Chrysostom: "The Lamb of God is immolated for thee; the blood contained in the chalice is drawn for thy cleansing from His sacred side." We cannot stand with Mary on Calvary's summit, and look upon the agony of our dying Saviour. But we can be present at the re-enactment of that same Sacrifice, offered now in an unbloody manner; and this we do whenever we assist at Mass. Believing this, how can we stay away from Mass; how can we assist at Mass coldly or indifferently?

THE MANNER OF OFFERING IS DIFFERENT

The Sacrifice offered on the cross and that offered in the Mass are the same Sacrifice. He Who offers it, the Victim offered, the reality of the offering, its purposes or ends, its efficacy and worth, all these are the same in the crucifixion on Calvary and in the Sacrifice of the Mass. But the manner of the offering is different. On the cross Jesus, not through the ministry of another but personally, offers the Sacrifice of Himself. In the Mass He offers Himself through the ministry of the priest, who acts in His name and by His authority.

On the cross the humanity of Christ was visible. They who were present at the awful tragedy of Calvary saw the Victim on the cross suffering untold agony, they heard His pitiful cry, "I thirst," they saw Him bow His head and die. But His divinity was utterly concealed from them, and all the attributes of God that belonged to this tortured, dying Victim are there, but unseen, unheard, unfelt. In the Mass both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus are as truly present as they were on the cross, but neither can be perceived by the senses. Their presence can be known only by faith.

On the cross Jesus' sufferings and death were real and present. They who witnessed them knew this well. In the Mass Jesus does not actually suffer or die; for: "Christ . . . dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9). Nonetheless in the Mass Jesus truly offers Himself a Victim for us, though His Sacrifice now is not accompanied by actual suffering and death. Seek not to penetrate too deeply into this mystery of the Mass, to know more than God has revealed. "For many things are shewn to thee above the understanding of men" (Ecclus. 3:25).

THE REALITY OF THE MASS

Wonder not that these meditations so often repeat and insist upon the identity of the Sacrifice of the Mass with the Sacrifice *of* the cross. That these two are essentially the same

Sacrifice is a fundamental truth. If we fail to grasp this truth we fail to have any conception of what the Mass really is. It is God's will that we humbly try by His grace to know all that He has made possible for us to know of His priceless gift of the Mass; for how can we appreciate and love that of which we know little or nothing?

"He was offered because it was His own will" (Isa. 53:7). Jesus came to the cross of His own will, remained on it until death, a Victim for the salvation of the world. In the Mass Jesus comes upon the altar, and by the separate consecration under the appearance of bread and of wine, showing forth His death on the cross, offers Himself a Victim for us. The reality and effectiveness of this offering of Himself in the Mass as a Victim come from the offering of Himself on the cross, of which the Mass is the re-presentation, though in an unbloody manner.

The Mass is not merely a series of prayers and ceremonies. These are only the casket that, as it were, enshrines a priceless treasure, God's own Son offered in Sacrifice for us. This is the reality of the Mass, the incarnate Son of God is present on the altar and, through the ministry of a priest, offers Himself a Victim for us. Before this tremendous mystery, where the senses fail and faith alone can help, we bow in deepest awe, in adoring love, as from the depths of our souls we cry: "My Lord and my God." Is it thus we assist at Mass?

THE MASS: THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

The Mass is the perfect Sacrifice for the same reasons that the sufferings and death of Christ on the cross were the perfect Sacrifice. This is true because the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the cross; only the manner of the offering is different. In the Mass Jesus Himself, through the ministry of a priest, really offers the Sacrifice. How perfect must that Sacrifice be which Jesus offers! As man Jesus offers this Sacrifice, but He is also God, Whose every act is perfect and divine. Think of this when we assist at Mass, He Who offers it is God as well as Man.

The Mass is the perfect Sacrifice, because the Victim

offered is Jesus Himself, Who once offered Himself on the cross. The Victim of Calvary and the Victim offered in the Mass is Jesus in His human nature; but that human nature, both on the cross and in the Mass, is united to the divinity of the Son of God. Is not that the perfect Sacrifice in which the Man who is offered as a Victim is also God? Is not that the perfect Sacrifice which offers to God the human nature of His own divine Son?

In the Mass Jesus offers His human nature, concealed under the lowly appearances of bread and wine, as a Sacrifice to God. And with it He offers all that in His sacred humanity He did and suffered on earth: His life, His labors, His prayers and fasts, all that He endured in His bitter passion, His pain and sorrow, His death on the cross. All these He offers to God in every Mass that is said as truly as He did when their awful weight was upon Him, when His body was subject to suffering and sorrow. What other sacrifice can be compared to this?

THE MASS: THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

In the life of St. Mechtilde it is related that our Lord once said to her: "I alone know and perfectly understand what this offering of Myself is which I make every day for the salvation of the faithful. It surpasses the comprehension of Cherubim and Seraphim and all the hosts of heaven." How little do we grasp of the greatness of this Sacrifice in which Jesus offers Himself to God! Yet this little will enable us to recognize that it is a priceless privilege to assist at Mass, to be present when Jesus offers the supreme Sacrifice of Himself.

Of all created things that exist or did exist nothing is so precious, so perfect as the sacred humanity of Christ. This most pure and perfect humanity Jesus Himself offers to the divine Trinity every day in the Sacrifice of the Mass. With it He offers all the acts and sufferings of His humanity in the thirty-three years of His life on earth. Though it is only the humanity of Christ that is offered as a Sacrifice in the Mass, yet, because that humanity is united to His

divinity, there is given to this Sacrifice an infinite value that makes it supreme.

Do we ever feel a realization of how little we give to God, of how little we do for Him? Are we not at times oppressed with the sense of our poverty, of our inability to give Him something really worth while? "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115:12.) It is in our power to give to God the most precious object that He could desire. It is the holy Mass. Assist at Mass often, reverently, lovingly, devoutly; and we will give Him more than all else, we will give Him the supreme Sacrifice.

THE MASS: A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT

The Mass is a Sacrifice of atonement for sin. The Church tells us that Christ at the Last Supper instituted the Mass: "That He might leave to the Church a visible Sacrifice, whereby the bloody Sacrifice on the cross might be re-presented, and its saving virtue be applied in remission of the sins we commit every day. . . . This Sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and if we draw nigh unto God He will be appeased by the offering thereof; and, granting the grace of penitence, will forgive even heinous crimes and sins" (Council of Trent).

The same love that once brought Jesus to the cross brings Him upon our altars now. He says to us: "Doubt not, but believe that every day I desire, with the same love and strong desire, to be sacrificed on the altar for every sinner, as I sacrificed Myself upon the cross for the salvation of the world." St. Thomas Aquinas tells us: "The anger of God may be appeased by the acceptable service we render Him when we hear Mass, and by the priceless gift we offer Him in the oblation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ."

Recognize the treasure we possess in the holy Mass, its boundless power of atonement. Recognize the truth of the words of St. John Damascene: "The immaculate and unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass is for the healing of all wounds and the purification of all stains." This most sacred Fountain of healing and cleansing, the Mass, is for all who will

approach it, for all who will draw from it the saving water that will wash away their sins: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isa. 12:3). Happy and blessed are we for whose cleansing this fountain ever flows. Do we come to it gladly and often? Do I?

THE MASS: A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

"Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for He will yet far exceed. . . . When you exalt Him put forth all your strength and be not weary, for you can never go far enough" (Eccclus. 43:32, 34). All creation cannot praise and glorify God sufficiently; for He is infinite, and His glory is beyond and above the comprehension of angels and of men. What we cannot do our blessed Lord in his human nature does for us in the Mass. From our altars He gives to God praise and glory that is adequate, that is infinite because He is also God.

St. Lawrence Justinian says: "It is certain that nothing gives God greater glory than the spotless Victim of the altar, which Christ ordained to be sanctified in order that His Church might offer praise to God." Have we never felt the burden of our inability to adore and praise God as much as we wished to do? Be comforted, and listen to the voice of His grace speaking to our souls: "Go to Mass: offer to Me that Sacrifice of praise, and you will thereby praise and glorify Me to the utmost of your desire."

Keep steadfastly in our minds this truth; God receives more praise and glory from the sacred humanity of Christ offered in the Mass than He receives from all creatures in heaven and on earth. In the Mass Jesus makes reparation for all the insults, irreverences, and sacrileges that have soiled the souls of sinners. Were it not for the Mass, offered everywhere and every hour, the world could not subsist. The sword of divine justice hanging over a sinning world is kept from falling by the Mass. On the cross and in the Mass the same Sacrifice of infinite praise to God far outweighs the sins of all the world.

THE MASS: A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

“And taking bread He gave thanks and broke, and gave to them, saying: This is My body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19). What Jesus did in the first Mass, at the Last Supper, He repeats every day upon our altars. He gives thanks to His Father in our behalf. He offers Himself a Sacrifice of thanksgiving for us who of ourselves have no way of giving sufficient and worthy thanks. As on the cross so in the Mass Jesus offers a thanksgiving infinite in value, for He Who offers Himself in thanksgiving for us is divine as well as human.

St. Irenaeus tells us: “Holy Mass was instituted for this, that we might not appear thankless to our God.” The Mass is the perfect Sacrifice of the New Law, because it is the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, repeated in an unbloody manner. To be a perfect sacrifice it should provide us with the means of fulfilling all our duties to God, and one of these duties is thanksgiving. In the Mass at which we assist Jesus gives us, as it were, His own infinite thanksgiving, puts it into our hands, that we may offer it for ourselves to the eternal Father.

St. Paul says: “I give thanks to my God always for you . . . that in all things you are made rich in Him” (1 Cor. 1:4, 5). Truly by the Mass we are made rich in Christ; He does so much for us, gives us so much in the Mass. And to crown it all He places at our disposal the best and most efficacious means of giving Him adequate thanks for all these benefits. But He expects us to make good use of this treasure which He has put in our hands. This we do by frequent and devout attendance at Mass. Have we done this?

THE MASS: A SACRIFICE OF PETITION

The Sacrifice of the Mass possesses an infinite power to obtain from God all graces and favors we need, because of the infinite value of this Sacrifice. In the Mass the blessed Saviour Himself, true God and true Man, petitions His Father for us. How can the Father refuse the prayer of His own divine Son? Again, Jesus does more than merely pray

for us. He offers Himself, in His human nature, to His Father as a Sacrifice to obtain what He asks for us. Jesus offers to His Father far more than He asks of Him. How, then, can the Father refuse His request?

“Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.” The Church teaches us that they who assist at Mass have a real share in the offering of Himself that Jesus, through the ministry of the priest, makes in the Mass. God will not be outdone in generosity by man. Will He not, then, make a fitting return when we offer to Him the sacred humanity of Christ, the wounds that He received, the tears and the blood that He shed, the life that He gave for us?

If we realized how precious a treasure we possess in the Mass we would cherish it more, we would make better and more frequent use of it. If we understood the power of the Mass to obtain our requests, to secure the graces and gifts we need so much, we would be more faithful, more fervent in assisting at Mass. What are our prayers compared to the prayers of the incarnate God. And in the Mass He pleads for us, He offers Himself for us. The Sacrifice of the Mass is never offered in vain, though we, in our littleness of vision, may not see the results.

THE MASS: THE CENTER OF WORSHIP

The Mass is not only the greatest act of worship, it is the center of all true worship of God. Sacrifice is the highest expression of our worship. The Mass, being the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, only the manner of its offering being different, is the most complete and perfect act of true worship. All our prayers, devotions, penitential and charitable works, good and great as they are, in value and efficacy fall far short of the Sacrifice of the Mass. The former are finite, the latter is infinite.

The Mass is the perfect and supreme act of worship. It contains within it all that constitutes true worship; adoration and praise, atonement, thanksgiving and petition. The humanity of Christ is offered in the Mass as once it was offered on Calvary; it is offered for us, in our name and in

our behalf. Because His human nature is always united to His divine nature this Offering gives infinite honor and glory to God. There is at our command no other sacrifice which can fulfill so perfectly our duties to God. He Himself can give us no greater sacrifice than that of the Mass.

As the planets revolving around the sun receive light and warmth from its light and heat, so our poor service to God receives light and strength and life from the perfect, the infinite Sacrifice of the Mass, the center of worship, the center of all our supernatural life. Take away this keystone of the spiritual life, and the arch will crumble and fall in ruins. But this cannot happen, for the Mass will never leave us so long as this planet remains a dwelling place for man. The last Mass on earth will be the signal for the archangel's trumpet to summon the human race to judgment.

THE POWER OF THE MASS

The Church tells us why Jesus instituted the Mass: "That He might leave to the Church a visible Sacrifice, whereby the bloody Sacrifice of the cross might be represented, and its salutary virtue be applied in remission of sins we daily commit" (Council of Trent). Because the Sacrifice of the cross and That of the Mass are one and the same Sacrifice, the power of the Mass is the same as that of the cross, and that power has no limit. The Mass applies to us what the cross obtained for us: "The fruits of that bloody Oblation are received most plentifully in this unbloody One" (Council of Trent).

There is no sin so grievous that it will not be forgiven, no stain so dark that it will not be purged away, no debt so great that it will not be paid by the cross. And this is true of the Mass, for the power of both is the same. There is no grace or gift that the cross has purchased for us that the Mass will not apply to us. Profit by this power, make good and frequent use of the treasure that is ours in the Mass.

"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. 31:3). In the Mass, as on the cross, Jesus draws souls to Him as the magnet draws steel. Braving danger and difficulty, counting not

the effort but the gain, souls are drawn to the Mass by the magnet of His love. And when they come to Him, so great is the blessed Saviour's love, again He offers Himself for them in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. Grace is poured forth upon them in abundant measure, stronger faith, firmer hope, deeper love. So great is the power of the Mass.

THE MERCY OF THE MASS

"We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple" (Ps. 47:10). The same love for souls that the divine Victim had on the cross He has in the Mass. In the Mass Jesus pours out upon us the infinite treasures of His mercies purchased for us by the Sacrifice on Calvary. The Mass is the "pearl of great price" (Matt. 13:46). Like the wise merchant who found it, and sold all he had to possess it, so should we seek it more diligently, value it more highly, profit by it more frequently. For, like the cross, the Mass is the fountainhead of the mercies of the Lord.

"O how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O God!" (Ps. 35:8.) So great is Jesus' love for us, so abounding His mercy that, not content with offering Himself in Sacrifice on the cross, He wished to continue this Sacrifice, in an unbloody manner, for all times in the Mass. Thus He enables us to offer to God more than all else that heaven and earth contain, to give Him more glory than all the prayers of angels and men could give, to gain in return more grace and merit from this offering to God of the very Source of grace.

In the Mass, because it is the same Sacrifice as That of the cross, Jesus puts Himself, as it were, in our hands, to be offered to His Father. This is well expressed by a holy and learned writer: "As often as you thus offer the body and blood, the merits and riches of Christ to the Eternal Father you count out to Him, so to speak, the coins wherewith you purchase heavenly treasures and a great increase of divine grace." Happy they who can earn treasures so great at so little cost. If we believe these truths how can we miss Mass?

THE GLORY OF THE MASS

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed” (John 20:29). As on the cross so now in the Mass all the glory and the beauty of the divine Sacrifice are hidden from mortal eyes. But what sight cannot behold faith can reveal. Glorious and beautiful beyond words to tell is the vision the spirits in heaven see when the words of Consecration are spoken, and the divine Victim is present on the altar as truly as He was once on the cross. They see the glory and the splendor, the power and the mercy of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

St. John Chrysostom tells us: “Forget not, O man, in what company thou art at the time of this solemn Sacrifice. Thou art standing amidst Cherubim and Seraphim and other exalted spirits of high rank. . . . When the priest at the altar offers the stupendous and sublime Sacrifice the angels stand beside him, and all around the altar are ranged choirs of heavenly spirits, who raise their voices in honor of the Victim Who is immolated.” They see what our eyes cannot behold. They see in all its wondrous reality the glory and the beauty of the Mass.

“Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus' love for us is greater, for He is both God and Man. Only the infinite mind of God can grasp the immensity of a love so boundless that it continues, in an unbloody manner, the Sacrifice on Calvary. Jesus' love for us, that brings Him upon our altars in the Mass and holds Him there a Victim as truly as it led Him to the cross and kept Him there — this love is the glory of the Mass. As there is no greater love, so there is no greater glory than this.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE MASS

THE PROPHECY OF MALACHIAS

“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 sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation” (Mal. 1:10, 11). Thus spoke Malachias, the last of the prophets, some four hundred years before the coming of Christ, and over a century after the end of the Babylonian captivity. The prophet was rebuking the Jews who again had failed in their duty to God.

This prophecy cannot refer to the sacrifices of the Old Law, for they were never offered “in every place.” It cannot refer to the Sacrifice of the cross, for that was offered only once and in one place. It cannot find its fulfillment in prayer and good works, for these are not sacrifices in the true sense of the word. The fulfillment of this prophecy can be found only in the Sacrifice of the Mass, a true and perfect Sacrifice, the “clean oblation” of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, offered to the eternal Father at all times, and in all places.

The Church makes this clear by her teaching authority: “At the Last Supper Christ offered up to God the Father His own body and blood under the species of bread and wine, and commanded the Apostles and their successors in the priesthood to offer them under these symbols when He said, ‘Do this for a commemoration of Me.’ And this is, indeed, that clean Oblation Which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness or malice of those that offer It, Which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered to His name in every place” (Council of Trent).

THE PROPHECY OF DAVID

“The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand. . . . The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech” (Ps. 109:1, 4). A thousand years before the coming of the Saviour David uttered this prophecy of the priesthood of Christ. He foretold that His priesthood would be unlike that of the Old Law, for it would be of the order of Melchisedech not of Aaron, and it would last forever. This priesthood was not extinguished by Christ’s death, but was continued in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass.

“Melchisedech, the King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God, blessed him,” i.e., Abram (Gen. 14:18, 19). This mysterious person, whose name means “king of justice” and whose title is, “king of peace” (Hebr. 7:2), is priest as well as king. As priest he offers a sacrifice of bread and wine, and as priest he receives tithes from Abraham (Hebr. 7:4). It is as priest that he is most signally honored by God, Who made the sacrifice of Melchisedech a type of the unbloody Sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

Since Jesus is “a priest forever according to the ordtx’ of Melchisedech,” so will He exercise His priestly office after the manner of Melchisedech. This He did at the Last Supper when He changed bread and wine into His own body and blood, to be offered to His Father. And that He might do this is all aftertimes, because He is a priest forever, Jesus ordained His Apostles priests: “Do this for a commemoration of Me” (Luke 22:19). Thus the prophecy of David is fulfilled whenever Jesus, through the ministry of His priests, offers Himself in Sacrifice under the appearance of bread and wine.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE PROPHECIES

“Hath He said, then, and will He not do? hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?” (Num. 23:19.) God is not as a man, that He should change or forget. “For ever, O Lord, Thy

word standeth firm in heaven" (Ps. 118:89). Neither is He unable to fulfill His promise. "Most fully knowing that whatsoever He has promised He is able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). Many do not believe in His promise to give us a perpetual Sacrifice, the unbloody continuation of the Sacrifice on Calvary, the Mass. But their unbelief cannot change the truth. "If we believe not, He continueth faithful, He can not deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

God has given us faith to enlighten our minds, the Church to guide our steps, and grace to accept and to use this light and guidance. Therefore to us it is given to see the perfect fulfillment of the prophecies of Malachias and of David. "In every place there is Sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean Oblation" (Mal. 1:11). This is the Mass, offered everywhere and "from the rising of the sun even to the going down." This is the Mass, in which Jesus is offered under the appearance of bread and wine by Him Who is "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109:4).

Thank God for the privilege that is ours, to see and to have not merely the promise of the perfect Sacrifice to come but the very Sacrifice itself, the unbloody Sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. This priceless treasure is ours, not only once in our lives, but as often as we wish to have it. If we are truly grateful for so good and great a privilege and grace, show our gratitude by the use we make of this privilege. Assist at Mass often, gratefully, devoutly.

THE FIRST MASS

It is the evening of Holy Thursday. The blessed Saviour is about to institute the Holy Eucharist, to offer the first Mass. O blessed night, O holy night in which the God-Man gave to the world so wonderful a proof and a memorial of His love! What greater thing could He give us to remember and to cherish than His love? What greater expression of His love is there than His bitter death on the cross? The Mass is the re-enactment of this expression of His love. And this He gave to us on the night of the Last Supper.

It is Jesus' farewell banquet to His Apostles. "And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father" (Matt. 26:29). Was there ever a banquet like to this? The food that Jesus gives to them and to us is His own body and blood in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. But He does more. He offers for them and for us His most sacred body and blood that will be sacrificed on the morrow on Calvary's cross; He offers the first Mass.

The first Mass is Jesus' last will and testament, in which He gave us Himself as a Sacrament and a Sacrifice, to be the food of our souls, and to be offered to the Father in an unbloody manner as He was offered in a bloody manner on Good Friday. Even whilst the first Mass was being offered already the shadows of Jesus' passion and death were upon Him. Barely an hour or two later He was on His way to Gethsemani. There His passion began, to end only when the Sacrifice was consummated on Calvary. The Mass is never separate from the cross.

WITH DESIRE

"With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). Our blessed Lord spoke these words at the Last Supper. He is about to institute the Holy Eucharist, to celebrate the first Mass. He is about to offer Himself a Victim to His eternal Father in an unbloody manner even before His actual death on the cross. It is as though He would not wait — so great was His love — and so He gives us the priceless treasure of the Mass in anticipation of the Sacrifice of Calvary, from which the Mass receives all its meaning and its value.

Humbly yet confidently look into the Sacred Heart of Jesus in these moments so fraught with all that makes for the welfare of a world. See the reason for His desire "to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." He saw a world sunk in spiritual destitution. Man had nothing to give to God worthy of divine acceptance. Jesus would give Himself a Sacrifice, not only by His actual death on the cross

but in the continuation of that Sacrifice for all times, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Jesus loved His own not only unto the end of His life on earth, unto the last pang of suffering, the last sigh of sorrow, He loved them unto the end of time and after. Therefore the night before His death He left them this gift of His undying love, the Mass. This He did that in all afterages there would be offered to the eternal Father the supreme and perfect Sacrifice of His own Son, a Victim not now in pain and death yet as truly sacrificed as He was on the cross.

SACRAMENT AND SACRIFICE

Of all times since the dawn of creation never has there been a day so filled with mysteries, so fraught with the eternal destiny of man as the twenty-four hours beginning with the Last Supper and ending with the consummation of the Sacrifice of Calvary, when Jesus died on the cross. These hours hold so much that the meditations of a lifetime can but lightly touch the surface of this fathomless ocean of faith and love. Every moment of these hours tells us of a love so great that only a heart of stone can be unmoved.

At the Last Supper Jesus gave Himself to us as a Sacrament to be received and as a Sacrifice to be offered. There is a clear difference between the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament and the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice. The former increases merit and gives to the soul what food gives to the body. The Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice not only increases merit but also atones for sin. The Sacrament benefits directly only the receiver; the satisfactory effect of the Sacrifice extends to all the faithful, living and dead. The purpose of the Sacrament is our own sanctification; the chief purpose of the Sacrifice is worship of God.

Enter in spirit the room made sacred by the divine mysteries about to be enacted, the room of the Last Supper. The Apostles are grouped about the blessed Lord at the table, the first altar of the New Law. From heaven the angels are watching with wondering, adoring love the unfold-

ing of the divine drama of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Sacrament and Sacrifice. Jesus is about to give Himself to be the food of our souls. He is about to give us the unbloody Sacrifice of Himself, a Victim for all times to come.

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION OF THE MASS

“My heart hath been in awe of Thy words” (Ps. 118:161). So sacred are the words we are about to hear, so filled with love, wisdom, and power that their like never has been heard before. Great is the power of God in the creative act that brought out of nothing the vast universe; great is the love of the Creator Who made the world for man. Greater yet is the power and the love that gave to man not merely a world but the very God of the universe. How the angels look down from heaven, and wonder!

O blessed words that gave us the incarnate Son of God as the food of our souls in Communion and as a Sacrifice to be offered until time shall be no more! O words of wondrous power and mercy that gave us the Mass! How shall we thank Thee, O God, for these words that have done so much for us, that have given us so much? By these words, spoken at the Last Supper and spoken again whenever through His priests He offers the Mass, Jesus re-enacts the Sacrifice of Calvary, He offers Himself a Victim for us.

When these words first were spoken on the night before Jesus suffered and died, all heaven was hushed as the angels listened in wondering awe, the while they beheld the glory and beauty of the Son of God in the Beatific Vision. When these words are spoken by the priest at Mass it is Jesus Who speaks them, for the priest is only the instrument through which Jesus acts. As in the first Mass, so in every other Mass afterward, once these words are spoken Jesus is on the altar offering Himself in the same Sacrifice as that of the cross. Do we realize this when we assist at Mass?

THE SEPARATE CONSECRATION

Jesus gave us at the Last Supper not only a Sacrament but also a Sacrifice. This He clearly indicated by the

separate Consecration first of the bread and afterward of the wine. He saw fit to change the bread first into His body by the words, "This is My body," and afterward the wine into His blood, saying, "This is My blood" (Matt. 26:26, 28). Under the appearance of bread was His living body, therefore His body and blood both; under the appearance of wine was His blood as it actually was at the time He spoke, in the veins of His body.

On the cross Jesus offered Himself a Victim by the real separation of His body and blood that caused His death. In the Mass He offers Himself a Victim, re-presenting, showing His death on the cross by the separate appearances of bread and wine under which are His body and blood. He could have changed the bread and wine into His body and blood by saying at the same moment, "This is My body and My blood." This He did not do because it would not have shown His death on the cross in the clear and striking manner of the separate Consecration.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). In the Mass the separate appearances of bread and of wine, under which are the body and the blood of Jesus, vividly portray the awful humiliation of His death on the cross. Thus the divine Redeemer offers Himself a Victim, not now by the violent separation of His body and blood in actual death but by the re-presentation of that death through the separation of the appearances that conceal His body and blood. Bow low in adoration before this mystery of faith and love.

MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU

"And taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke and gave to them, saying: This is My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:1g). Everything connected with the institution of the Holy Eucharist points to its character of Sacrifice as well as of Sacrament, everything speaks of Jesus' passion and death. He chose for the time of institution the night before He suffered and died. "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should pass out of this world to the Father" (John 13:1), instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass, to be not

only a memorial but also a real though unbloody representation, re-enactment of the Sacrifice of the cross.

The words Jesus used in the institution at the Last Supper show us the sacrificial nature of the Holy Eucharist: "This is My body which is given for you"; or as St. Paul relates it: "This is My body which shall be delivered for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). As soon as these words were spoken, under the appearance of bread was the living body of Christ that on the morrow would be given for us, that now is given for us, now as on Calvary a Victim, now as on Calvary truly sacrificed; only the manner of the offering is different.

Behold Jesus on the cross, His body devoid of motion, power, life. Behold Him on the altar of the first Mass. His body, with all its beauty, power, and life, to all outward seeming is dead, even as on the morrow it would be really dead on the cross. On the altar Jesus is present under the separate appearances of bread and wine, and thus offers Himself to His Father. Only divine wisdom could devise this wondrous means of thus continuing in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of the cross when the body and blood of Jesus actually were separated.

MY BLOOD WHICH SHALL BE SHED

"For this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Jesus at the Last Supper spoke these words over the chalice. In that chalice now is His own most precious blood, the blood which that same night will be forced from His body in the agony at Gethsemani, and on the morrow in the scourging, in the crowning with thorns, and in the crucifixion. In that chalice is the price of the redemption of the world, the ransom for our souls. In that chalice are all our hopes of heaven.

At the first Mass this most precious blood was not only present, it was given to be received as a Sacrament and to be offered as a Sacrifice. Therefore the blessed Lord did not say merely, "This is My blood," but added, "which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." As the blood of Christ was offered on Calvary, so also in the first Mass and

in every subsequent Mass His blood is offered, and will be offered until the end of time. St. Ambrose tells us: "As often as the blood of Christ is shed it is shed for the remission of sins."

On the cross Jesus offered the Sacrifice of His blood shed in a visible, violent, and painful manner. This Sacrifice was all-sufficient, no other sacrifice could supplant it. The Eucharistic Sacrifice instituted at the Last Supper is not a different Sacrifice, it is the same Sacrifice as that of the cross, and derives its efficacy from Calvary. Jesus gave us the Mass, "that He might leave to the Church a visible Sacrifice, whereby that bloody Sacrifice might be re-presented, and its salutary virtue be applied in remission of sins we daily commit" (Council of Trent).

DO THIS FOR A COMMEMORATION OF ME

"And taking bread He gave thanks, and broke, and gave to them, saying: This is My body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner the chalice also" (Luke 22:19, 20). What tremendous power lies in these words! Because of them we have now and will have for all time the priceless treasure of the Mass. For, by the command, "Do this," Jesus gave to the Apostles the power to do what He did, to change bread and wine into His body and blood, to offer His body and blood a Sacrifice, even as He did at the Last Supper.

By these words Jesus instituted the priesthood of the New Law, sharing in His priesthood, offering in His name and person the unbloody Sacrifice of His body and blood. This He did, "that He might leave to His Church a visible Sacrifice, whereby that bloody Sacrifice, that was to be accomplished once on the cross, might be re-presented, and the memory thereof remain even to the end of the world" (Council of Trent). For this purpose Jesus gave us the Mass.

"Do this." These words hold the same power and love that created the universe, that made man, that orders all things for the service of man. These words hold an even greater love. Not content with the Sacrifice of Calvary, not

content with giving up His human life for us, Jesus, in an unbloody manner, renews for us this same Sacrifice, to endure until the end of time. Great, indeed, is the love that brought the Son of God to the crib of Bethlehem, to the cross of Calvary, that brings Him now upon our altars in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE FIRST PRIESTS

The first to share in the priesthood of Christ were the Apostles. Because Christ's priesthood was to be continued and exercised on earth after His death on the cross, He gave to His Apostles the power to offer the unbloody Sacrifice of His body and blood in the Mass. This they would do by virtue of His command, "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19). Thus would be fulfilled the prophecy of Malachias: "In every place there is Sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean Oblation" (Mal. 1:11).

Jesus had told the Apostles that this very night He would be betrayed by one of them, and on the morrow would suffer the awful death of crucifixion. And now He tells them that they are His priests, endowed with a power greater than that of the high priest of the Old Law, endowed with the power to bring Him upon the altar of the New Law, as a Sacrament to be received and as a Sacrifice to be offered. From His hands they received His body and blood in Holy Communion, the while they remembered His words of a year before: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52).

What thoughts must have passed through the mind of the Apostles on this day of their first Communion and their Ordination! "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). How great that love was they now had ample proof. Endowed with powers no angel ever received, theirs is now the privilege to bring the incarnate Son of God into the hearts of men, to offer Him to the eternal Father in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. After Jesus had entered into His glory, then began the ministry of His first priests, the Apostles.

THE PERPETUITY OF THE MASS

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament, not only for the Apostles and the other Christians of their time but for all the faithful for all time. This He made clear in His promise of Holy Communion. "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:52). "If any man eat of this bread . . . for the life of the world." Surely these words tell us that God's gift is for all time.

In like manner the Sacrifice of the Mass was not only for the Apostles and the Christians of their day, but was for all Christians until the end of time. "Thou art a priest for ever" (Ps. 109:4). This was prophesied of Christ, Whose priesthood, therefore was not terminated by His death on the cross. At the Last Supper Jesus offered the first Mass in person and visibly, then gave to the Apostles the command and the power, "Do this." This power was given them to be used and transmitted to their successors, the priests of the Church.

In the course of their ministry the Apostles ordained priests to exercise the power of offering the Mass, and consecrated bishops with the authority and power to ordain priests. These bishops, in turn, ordained priests, and so the ministry of the Church was perpetuated, and the Mass was offered wherever the Gospel was preached. "And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had ordained to them priests in every church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord" (Acts 14:22). And St. Paul tells his disciple, Titus: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou . . . shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). Thus is Christ's priesthood continued in His Church and the Mass perpetuated for all times.

THE POWER OF THE PRIEST

It is true that in the Mass Jesus Himself offers the Sacrifice, He is both Priest and Victim. As St. John Chrysostom puts it: "The priest is only a minister. When you see the priest at the altar, think not that it is he who offers the Sacrifice, but believe that it is the hand of Christ, invisible to mortal

sight." The priest is only His servant, placing at His disposal his lips, his voice, his hands, that through their instrumentality Jesus may offer the divine Sacrifice. What an honor this is, to be God's instrument through which is accomplished so great a miracle!

It is also true that the priest, though only God's instrument, effects the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Mass. This he does not by any power inherent in himself but only by the power that God gave him: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19). What a stupendous power is this, greater than aught the angels have! By a few words spoken over bread and wine the priest brings the Son of God upon the altar, to be received as a Sacrament and to be offered as a Sacrifice.

No wonder St. Augustine exclaims: "How great is the dignity of a priest, in whose hands Christ again becomes man!" Wonderful indeed is the power of the words of Consecration, a renewal, as it were, of Christ's incarnation. As Mary brought Jesus into the world on the first Christmas morning, so the priest brings Mary's Son upon the altar in the Mass. As truly as Jesus offered Himself a Sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, so now, though in an unbloody manner, He renews that Offering through the ministry of His priest. How great that ministry is only God can fully comprehend.

GOD'S PRIEST

"You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). These words Jesus spoke to His Apostles, the first priests, and these words He speaks to His priests today. They are called by God, set apart by God from the rest of men. St. Paul says of the priests of the Old Law: "Every high priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God. . . . Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God" (Hebr. 5:1, 4). How much more true is this of the priests of the New Law!

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God"

(1 Cor. 4:1). Thus spoke St. Paul of the priests of the New Law. They are God's ministers, dispensing to us God's mysteries. Especially is this verified in the Mass, so intimately is the priest connected with this mystery. At the Consecration he does not say: "This is the body of Christ; this is the blood of Christ." He does not use his own words but the words that Jesus used: "This is My body; this is My blood."

The effect of these words is wholly supernatural, beyond mere human power; for these are the words not of a mere man but of the Son of God, spoken through the instrumentality of a man. He Who said: "Let there be light," and there was light, now says through His priest, "This is My body," and it is His body. How close to the divine mystery of the Mass the priest stands! How nearly he touches the infinite! He is not only a man of God, he is a priest of God, a dispenser of the mysteries of God; he is God's minister through whom we have the Mass.

OUR PRIEST

He who is standing at the altar about to offer the divine Sacrifice is not only God's priest, he is our priest. He is constituted a priest, not for himself but for us. He offers the Mass in our names and behalf, acting as our representative; and as our ambassador he presents our prayers to God in union with his. This is shown by many of the prayers in the Mass, which clearly indicate that these prayers are said in the name of all present and for their benefit.

Immediately before the Consecration the priest prays: "We, therefore, beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this oblation of our service as also of Thy whole family." And immediately after the Consecration he adds: "Wherefore, O Lord, we, Thy servants, as also Thy holy people . . . offer unto Thee . . . the holy bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting salvation." No wonder St. Peter says: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). Blessed, indeed, is our privilege, to have a share in offering the Mass, man's greatest gift to God. Do we appreciate this privilege?

The Latin word for priest, *sacerdos*, is formed from two

words meaning, "one who gives us something sacred." This is just what the priest is, one who gives us the most sacred of all holy things, the Mass. It is God Who gives us the Mass, but He has seen fit to do this through His priest. And with the Mass He has given us all graces and blessings. The priest is the minister of Christ, the dispenser of the mysteries of God. Of him Jesus said: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me" (John 13:20). St. Paul describes him: "As needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). This is our priest, whose ministry enriches many.

THE FRUITS OF THE MASS

THE MASS: A TREASURY OF GRACES

IN holy Mass we receive riches so wonderful, gifts so divine, graces so great and abundant, that only faith can give us even the least conception of the wealth of this treasure house of divine omnipotence and love. Just as we might take from the ocean all the water we need without exhausting the supply, so, in far greater measure, from the holy Mass we may draw all graces we need and never lessen in the slightest degree their abundant flow. Vast and mysterious, indeed, are the depths of the riches of the Mass.

St. Lawrence Justinian says: "No human tongue is capable of telling us how abundant and great are the gifts and graces that flow from the Mass into the souls that profit by this greatest of God's gifts to man." Again we are told: "There is nothing so profitable to mankind, so helpful for the attainment of spiritual riches as the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass." The Church, exhorting the faithful to assist devoutly and frequently at holy Mass, tells us clearly: "We must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself" (Council of Trent).

How easily we can become rich with only a little effort, if we unite with the priest in offering the Son of God with all His merits to the Father in the holy Mass! There is so much to gain, and that with so little cost to us. If we realized how blessed and privileged we are to have at our disposal this precious storehouse of spiritual gifts we would prize it more. Pray for the grace to appreciate more fully God's merciful gift of the Mass. Pray for the grace to desire it and to use it more devoutly and more frequently.

COME AND BUY WITHOUT MONEY

“You that have no money, make haste . . . come ye and buy . . . without money and without any price” (Isa. 55:1). These words of the prophet well apply to the Mass, wherein God enriches with most precious graces not only the priest who offers the Mass but all who join with him. The only cost is faith and love and true devotion. St. Cyril tells us: “Spiritual gifts are freely given to those who assist at Mass reverently.” And St. Maximus says: “Christians should never neglect holy Mass, because of the grace of the Holy Ghost, of which all who are present are made partakers.”

“He That spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?” (Rom. 8:32.) God delivered up His Son for us once in the Sacrifice on Calvary. He delivers up His Son for us again and again in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. The graces and blessings that Jesus merited for us on the cross He gives freely and abundantly in the Mass to those of good will who “come, and buy without money.” Come, then, to this treasure house of grace; make good use of the wealth that is ours in the Mass.

“Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits” (Ecclus. 24:26). If only we realized the treasure that is ours for the seeking, the precious gift of the Mass, our churches would be filled all the year round. We would not need the command of the Church to assist at Mass on Sundays and holydays; we would be only too glad to come as often as we could to the “fountain of grace,” to be filled with its riches. If material riches were offered as freely as the riches of grace we would need no command to come.

DESIRE FOR THE MASS AND ITS FRUITS

“For my fruit is better than gold and the precious stone, and my blossoms than choice silver” (Prov. 8:19). Most of us need a greater love for the Mass and for its fruits, a greater desire for the Mass and for its fruits. How can we expect God to give us that for which we have but little love or desire? How the angels wonder when they see a priest offer-

ing Mass in his parish church before empty pews! Remember the warning: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace" (Luke 19:42).

Who does not desire health, happiness, and riches? Who will not accept them when freely offered? The fruits of the Mass are spiritual health, happiness, and riches. Many prefer the former, comparatively few prefer the latter. If money dropped down from the clouds, would we not hasten to pick it up? Why, then, are we careless and indifferent when the riches of heaven, the money that purchases eternal life, can be ours in the Mass? "For all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay" (Wisd. 7:9).

"I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light; for her light cannot be put out. . . . For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God" (Wisd. 7:10, 14). These words, spoken of the wisdom that comes from God, apply also to the Mass and its fruits. Is this the desire we have for the Mass and its fruits? It should be. It would be if we believe the words of Pope Innocent the Third: "Through the power of the Mass all virtues are increased in us, and we obtain a plentiful share of the fruits of grace."

LEARN, AND WE WILL DESIRE

How can we desire greatly that of which we know but little? To increase our desire for the Mass we must increase our knowledge of the wonderful fruits that may be gained by sharing devoutly with the priest in the offering of the divine Sacrifice. We will learn that we have in the Mass a mine of inexhaustible riches, from which we can draw as much as we will. These are the riches that endure forever, that God has reserved for His friends: "That I may enrich them that love Me, and may fill their treasures" (Prov. 8:21).

The Church teaches us: "We must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery, wherein that life-giving Victim, by Which we were reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests" (Council of Trent).

Because this act is so holy and divine, in which the people unite with the priest in the offering of the Mass, it should be also most meritorious and profitable to both. How eager we would be to assist at Mass fervently and often if only we realized the surpassing value and greatness of its fruits!

He who assists at Mass devoutly and well is richer in grace and merit when he leaves the church than when he entered. Two men come to a spring, one bringing a small pitcher, the other a large one. Each takes away only what the pitcher can hold. The fruits of the Mass are given most generously yet in some proportion to the good will and disposition of each recipient. Learn now something of the spiritual riches that God has waiting for us in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The more we learn the more we will wonder, admire, love, and desire.

OUR SHARE IN THE FRUITS OF THE MASS

The Mass is not merely a form of prayer, it is a Sacrifice. It is the unbloody re-presentation of the Sacrifice that Jesus made once in a bloody manner on the cross. Both the nature and the ends or purposes of the Mass are identical with those of the Sacrifice on Calvary. These ends or purposes are to offer to God a perfect praise, atonement, thanksgiving, and petition. In the Mass both He Who makes the offering and the Victim offered is Jesus Christ Himself; hence this Offering is infinite in worth and power.

From the infinite value of the Mass we who assist at and share in its offering have a certain share in the infinite praise, atonement, thanksgiving, and petition that Christ gives to His Father. Our share also in the merits and graces of the Mass, though finite, because our capacity is finite, is greater than can be had from any other source. The better our dispositions are in assisting at Mass and the oftener we assist at Mass, the greater will be that share, the more we will give to God and the more we will receive from Him.

To gain in the fullest degree the benefits of the Mass, the measure of merit and grace God deigns to give us, we must assist at the divine Sacrifice with a humble and contrite heart, in strong faith and ardent love. We must keep minds and

hearts intent upon the divine Mystery enacted before us, conscious of our part and share in it. In the measure in which we do this, will be fulfilled the words of Scripture, speaking of the wisdom that comes from God: "Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wisd. 7:11).

INCREASE OF SANCTIFYING GRACE

"The Lord will give grace and glory" (Ps. 83:12). God gives us His grace or increases it in us in many ways and through many channels, especially through the sacraments, which He instituted for that very purpose. But it is in the Mass that His grace is poured out in most abundant measure to those who assist devoutly at the divine Sacrifice. Thus we are told by one of the learned writers in the Church: "The power of the merits of Christ's passion is most forcibly felt in the Mass, in procuring for us graces and heavenly riches in marvelous abundance."

Another holy writer tells us: "As often as you assist at Mass you offer the body and blood, the merits and riches of Christ to the eternal Father. And in doing this you count out to Him, as it were, the money with which you purchase heavenly treasures and a great increase of divine grace." The measure in which we receive this increase of sanctifying grace is determined by the manner in which we assist at Mass and our dispositions. Assisting at Mass does not consist in merely being present in person but in offering it to God in union with the priest.

The Mass is a limitless ocean of grace from which countless souls draw, some in great, some in less measure, according to the closeness of their participation in the divine Mystery. They who assist carelessly, indifferently, draw comparatively little. They who assist with imperfect reverence or devotion fail to secure their full measure of grace. But they who with devout mind and heart follow the Mass closely, offering it to God in union with the priest, with faith and love and deep humility, they shall receive "good measure, and pressed down, and running over" (Luke 6:38). These shall be filled with the good things of the Lord.

PROGRESS IN VIRTUE

“She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God” (Wisd. 7:14). These words spoken of true wisdom surely apply to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. They that use well God’s precious gift of the Mass advance more and more in His favor, in His grace, in the practice of virtue. It is a principle of the spiritual life that either we progress in virtue or we fall back; we cannot remain stationary. No progress in virtue is possible without the help of God’s grace: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

In all creation there cannot be found a more abundant and unfailing source of grace to enable us to progress in virtue than the Mass. They who devoutly assist at Mass, in union with the priest, offer to the eternal Father a gift more precious than all that creation can give, the humanity of His own divine Son. Will He not in return give them His own most precious gifts? And what gifts are more precious than those which so efficiently promote and sustain our progress in virtue, thus bringing us closer to Him now, closer to Him afterward in heaven?

“Be you, therefore, perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). God loves us so much that He wishes us not to be content with our imperfect service. He wishes us to strive constantly to improve that service, to advance in virtue, even to strive for perfection. He wishes us to come closer, to keep closer to Him, to conform our thoughts, our desires, and our lives to Jesus, our divine Model. In the Mass are given to us the graces to accomplish all this. The better and the oftener we assist at Mass the more graces we will receive, the greater will be our progress in virtue.

INCREASE OF FAITH

One of the fruits of the Mass is an increase of faith, strengthening and perfecting in the exercise of the virtue of faith those who devoutly assist at Mass. The Mass is an answer to the prayer of the Apostles, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). It is a fulfillment of the prophecy of old: “I

will espouse thee to Me in faith; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (Osee 2:20). The nearer we approach the light the more brightly it shines upon us. The closer we come to the source of truth and grace the more our minds and wills are brought under their influence.

The Mass is a mystery of faith. So close is our association with this mystery by our share in offering it that it calls for a strong, unquestioning faith. This faith God gives to us in increasing measure every time we assist devoutly at Mass. This increase of faith is an unfailing result of frequent and fervent attendance at Mass. The oftener we assist at Mass and the better our dispositions are the stronger grows our faith, which, "as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. 4:18), the day when faith changes to sight.

As God rewards the fidelity of His people in assisting at Mass, so He punishes their refusal to accept and use His precious gift of the Mass. The first signs of a weakening faith can generally be traced to carelessness in attendance at Mass, hearing Mass with little or no thought or care of the tremendous mystery enacted. If unchecked this leads to the complete abandonment of the practice of assisting at Mass, with the consequent loss of faith. "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke 19:42).

INCREASE OF HOPE

Another fruit of the Mass is an increase of trust in God, of hope that He will give us all graces needed for our salvation, that He will enlighten and strengthen us to do all that He wishes us to do to be saved. Jesus told us that without Him we can do nothing, but He also told us by His Apostle: "I can do all things in Him Who strengthened! me" (Phil. 4:13). So strong and firm is the hope given us in the Mass of receiving this strength and of attaining eternal life that it requires supernatural faith to believe it.

The Church teaches us: "The fruits indeed of that bloody Oblation, the Sacrifice of the cross, are received most plentifully through that unbloody one, the Sacrifice of the Mass"

(Council of Trent). All our hopes of salvation spring from the passion and death of Christ, the cause of eternal life. However, that we may obtain eternal life the fruits of Jesus' sufferings and death must be applied to us. This is done abundantly in the Mass, the treasury of all graces. They who are faithful to the Mass will find that "Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope" (Ps. 4:10).

"Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28). We who are wearied with the strife and turmoil of life, discouraged by our failures and falls, conscious of our weak and imperfect service to God, come to Him Who is waiting for us, come to Mass: "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits" (Ecclus. 24:26); "I, I Myself will comfort you" (Isa. 51:12). Yes, Jesus in the Mass will comfort us, will give us hope. "And thou shalt have confidence, hope being set before thee" (Job 11:18). Jesus in the Mass is our hope. Come to Him.

INCREASE OF LOVE

"Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13). When love dies, faith and hope die with it. When love is strong, faith and hope thrive. The Mass increases our love for God. The Mass, like the cross, is a mystery of God's boundless love for us who so little deserve His love. Behold our Saviour on the cross, dying that we might live. The same love that kept Him on the cross now keeps Him in the Mass, renewing in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of the cross.

"Who would not love One Who so loves us?" (The Adeste.) Before such a love as this can any heart, if it is of flesh and not of stone, remain unmoved? Before the fire of such a love the coldest heart should glow with the fire of an answering love. And so it will if only that heart come to Jesus in the Mass, and accept the gentle yet impelling grace of the Victim on the altar. The indifferent will become fervent, the careless will awaken from their torpor, even the dead in sin will receive the grace of contrition, and be restored to life.

Come to the throne of God's love in the Mass. Come to

the light and the warmth of a charity that is divine, boundless, and untiring. Come to this fountain of love and grace in the midst of the desert of a sinful world. Come to Mass as often as we can, not merely when we must. Assist devoutly at the Sacrifice of divine love, and our love for God will take on a stronger, deeper, broader life. The more we love the Mass and the more we use it the closer we are to God on earth, the closer we will be to Him in heaven.

GREATER GENEROSITY IN GOD'S SERVICE

Another fruit of the Mass received by those who devoutly assist thereat is a greater generosity in the service we give to God. "Give to the most High according to what He hath given to thee" (Ecclus. 35:12). No matter how much we give to God we can never give Him near enough. "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded, you say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke 17:10). God does not need our service or our gifts, but He wishes them, asks for them and graciously accepts them.

Because God deigns to desire our service and gifts we must give Him the best: "Offer to God worthy offerings" (Ecclus. 14:11). We must strive to give Him a service as near perfection as we can: "That you may stand perfect and full in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). To do this we need God's special help and grace, for: "From Me is thy fruit found" (Osee 14:9). This help and grace God gives us abundantly in the Mass. From this fountain of grace we will receive the grace to "abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Will we not seek it where it may be found?

When we possess sanctifying grace every good work that we do to please God is rewarded by an increase of grace. The more excellent the work and the better it is performed the more and greater graces we receive. What work can we offer to God more acceptable than that of sharing in the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass? What better actual grace can we receive than that of a great generosity in serving God? The more devoutly and the oftener we assist at Mass the more

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God increases in us this grace, the better we serve Him, the nearer our lives approach to perfection.

GREATER HORROR OF SIN

“Who can understand sins?” (Ps. 18:13.) How little we realize what sin, especially mortal sin, truly is! How little we understand what it means to offend God! How little we recognize the great evil that even venial sin is! The Holy Scripture tells us something of the evil of which they are guilty who commit mortal sin: “How much more, do you think, he deserveth worse punishments who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the Testament unclean by which he was sanctified!” (Hebr. 10:29.) “Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery” (Hebr. 6:6).

If we were standing at the foot of the cross and saw the awful agony of Him Who hung upon it and died upon it, knowing by the faith God gave us that this Victim is the God-Man, we would realize more strongly how great an evil sin is. Surely that is the greatest evil which requires so fearful an atonement, so terrible a price to pay to the justice of God. “He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

The most Sacred Host which we behold at the Elevation in the Mass is the same Victim Who once hung on the cross. In the Mass, as truly as on the cross but in a different manner, Jesus offers Himself to His Father in atonement for our sins and for those of all the world. Does not the realization of this truth fill our souls with a horror of the evil which required so fearful an expiation? The oftener we assist at Mass devoutly the stronger grows our horror of sin, the stronger our determination to avoid sin at any cost.

GREATER LOVE FOR VIRTUE

“Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). A greater love for virtue is a distinguishing mark of those who assist at Mass devoutly and often. How could it be otherwise? They who are in so intimate contact with the

source and cause of all virtue see its beauty and attractiveness, love it and desire it the more. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (i Cor. 6:17). And, "They that are according to the spirit mind the things that are of the spirit" (Rom. 8:5). The closer we are united to Jesus the more we imbibe of His spirit.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill" (Matt. 5:6). In the Mass Jesus gives to the devout soul a greater desire for virtue, and at the same time enables and helps that soul to secure the fulfillment of its desire. In the measure in which the soul corresponds to this grace of greater desire it is enriched by many other graces, to rise higher in the practice of virtue, toward perfection in God's service. "They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls" (Ecclus. 2:20).

In the natural order it is the tendency of light and of heat to diffuse itself. In the supernatural order the same law holds; goodness seeks to spread and reach beyond its source. Especially is this seen in the Mass, the ever flowing fountain of grace. They who come within its reach, they who share in the offering of the divine Sacrifice with faith, love, humility, and contrition will find their love and desire for virtue greatly increased. To them will be given in greater measure the desire and the grace to "walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing, being fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10).

GREATER PURITY OF HEART

"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands and clean of heart" (Ps. 23:3, 4). How spotless, how pure and holy must be the soul that stands in the presence of the altar of God, that shares in offering to the eternal Father the immaculate Lamb of God Who is also the very God of all holiness and purity! In His presence the least stain of sin looms up as a blot, a darkening shadow. Before the light of His sanctity, "even the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight" (Job 25:5).

"And as I knew that . . . this also was a point of wisdom

to know whose gift it was, I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisd. 8:21). Our blessed Lord knows how much we need the grace to be holy, pure, and innocent. He knows that from Him alone this grace can be had. Where better can we find it than in the Mass, the font of holiness and purity? The oftener we assist at the divine Sacrifice devoutly and humbly the more abundantly we will receive the gift of innocence and purity of heart.

In heaven the angels veil their face before the brightness of the glory of Him Who "inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 Tim. 6:16). In the Mass we are in the presence of the same God Who is "clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. 103:2); of Whom the prophet spoke: "Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13); "Come ye to Him, and be enlightened" (Ps. 33:6). Come to Him in the Mass; come to Him "Who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 1:24). "He is faithful Who hath called you, Who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

GREATER ZEAL

Only imperfectly do we follow the example of our blessed Lord, Who said: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49.) "My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me" (John 4:34). God sent us into this world not to do our own will but His, to do the work He gave us to do, the promotion of His glory on earth, the salvation of our souls and that of others. With what earnestness and zeal are we doing this work? Do we live up to the injunction of St. Paul: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3)?

If we are honest with ourselves we will acknowledge that our zeal for God falls far short of what it ought to be. But we know where to seek and to find the grace of greater zeal. It is in the Mass. In the Mass we share in offering to the Father Jesus Christ, Whose whole life on earth was filled with zeal for His Father's glory and for the salvation of souls. So close is our union with Jesus in the Mass that we receive a spark from the fire of His divine zeal.

“I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?” (Luke 12:49.) On the cross neither suffering nor death could dim the light of Jesus’ love and zeal. In the Mass the same great love and zeal shine forth, and inflame the hearts of the faithful to a full and generous response. In the presence of so great a love and zeal as His our service seems so poor and weak and little. We are ashamed that we have done so little for Him Who has done so much for us. Come often to Him at Mass; and the gift of greater zeal will be ours.

MORE COURAGE

“The life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Job 7:1). We know this well from our own experience. Enemies from without and from within threaten our spiritual lives; and only by God’s grace can we hope to gain the victory and save our souls: “Behold, there is no hope for me in myself” (Job 6:13). “How shall we be able to stand before their face unless Thou, O God, help us?” (1 Mach. 3:53.) The answer is: “He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him; I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and I will glorify him” (Ps. 90:15).

Great is the power of the cross, that brings light from darkness, strength from weakness, life from death. “The darkness is passed, and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2:8). The darkness of Calvary that penetrated even into the soul of Christ has brought to us the light of hope. From His weakness and suffering come to us strength and courage to do and to bear. By His death we live. “So must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting” (John 3:14, 15).

Great is the power of the Mass, many and precious are its fruits. One of them is the grace of greater courage. Behold by faith our blessed Saviour in the Mass. In outward appearance He is as weak and helpless as He was on the cross. His weakness is our strength. He is offered in the Mass for us. Come to Him there, and He will give us courage, patience, and strength to do and to accept the hard things of life, to overcome temptations, to practice virtue when its practice is difficult. Assist at Mass devoutly and often, and we will

receive the grace to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God” (Rom. 12:1).

GREATER CONFORMITY TO GOD’S WILL

“Not as I will but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). This was Jesus’ prayer when His passion began in Gethsemani. This was His prayer even to the end: “It is consummated. And, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). By His cross Jesus taught us that the only thing that counts is doing God’s will, accepting His will, no matter how much it costs. For this He came into the world, for this He suffered and died: “I came down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him That sent Me” (John 6:38).

As on the cross so in the Mass Jesus offers Himself to His Father in obedience to the divine will. “It is written of Me that I should do Thy will, O My God” (Ps. 39:8,9). We know what God’s will is in our regard: “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). On the cross Jesus merited for us the grace to do and to accept His will in all things. In the Mass this grace is given to us in the measure in which we desire it and seek it. The oftener we assist at Mass devoutly, humbly asking this grace, the more abundantly it will be given to us.

You who assist at Mass with strong faith and deep devotion know something of Jesus’ complete conformity to His Father’s will. In the Incarnation He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). In the Mass He conceals both His divinity and humanity under the form of bread and wine. This He did that He might offer Himself a true Sacrifice for us. How can we who know this refuse the complete surrender of our wills to Him Who gave up His will for us? This is the grace Jesus gives us in the Mass, the grace of greater conformity to God’s will.

GREATER HUMILITY

“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Who could stand beneath the cross of Christ and not Be humble, knowing that He who is hanging upon that cross, suffering and dying in

His human nature, at the same time is the great God Himself? How can we be anything but humble, knowing that He is suffering and dying for us, that He is paying our debt, the price we ought to pay for the ransom of our souls? "Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. 1:5).

How can anyone assist at Mass, knowing what the Mass is, and not be humble? We are present at the same Sacrifice as that of Calvary, the Victim is the same, He offers Himself now as truly as He did then, only the manner of offering is different, for now He does not actually suffer and die. As on the cross Jesus atoned for our sins, so now in the Mass He offers that atonement for all who are present. This He does by reproducing, re-enacting in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of Calvary.

What have we done to deserve love so great, mercy so divine? "Who am I, O Lord God . . . that Thou shouldst give such things to me?" (1 Par. 17:16.) "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10). In the presence of the divine Victim offered for us on the altar we confess in shame and sorrow: "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved" (Job 33:27). "And therefore let us humble our souls before Him" (Jud. 8:16). From the treasury of the Mass Jesus gives to those who desire it the grace of greater humility, the grace to learn the lesson of humility that He teaches us in the Mass.

REMISSION OF GRIEVOUS SINS

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us: "The special effect of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is that it operates our reconciliation with God." On the cross Jesus suffered and died that we might be freed from grievous sin, and receive the supernatural life of grace now and of glory afterward in heaven. In the Mass He offers Himself to the eternal Father for the same purpose. In the Mass Jesus stretches out His arms to every sinner in loving welcome, if only he will come to receive forgiveness and life.

So great is the charity of Christ that in the Mass He desires

to be offered for every sinner with the same strong desire that brought Him to the cross for the salvation of sinners. As on the cross so in the Mass Jesus offers the life of grace to all who have lost it by sin. There is no one, however heavily burdened with sin, who may not hope for pardon, if he will assist at Mass, desiring and seeking forgiveness: "Come to Me . . . and your soul shall live" (Isa. 55:3).

The Church tells us how grievous sins are forgiven in the Mass. "The Holy Synod teaches that this Sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and, if one draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, He will be appeased by the offering of the Mass and, granting the grace and gift of penitence, will forgive even heinous crimes and sins" (Council of Trent). Father Gobat explains this: "The Mass is an expiatory Sacrifice of such value that, for the sake of it, God grants to all who assist at it the power to do whatever is necessary to obtain pardon for the mortal sins they may have committed. This means, He gives them grace to know and be sorry for their sins, and to make a good confession."

REMISSION OF VENIAL SINS

The Church teaches us: "Christ instituted the holy Mass at the Last Supper, that its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we commit every day" (Council of Trent). Our blessed Lord has given us other means of securing the pardon of our venial sins outside the sacrament of penance, such as prayers, good works, and patience in trials. None of these, however, is so efficacious as the Mass. For in these we offer to God only what comes from us, whereas in the Mass we offer Christ's atonement, having a value infinitely greater than anything of our own.

Some form of contrition, though imperfect and only implied, is required for the forgiveness of venial sins. The desire to be free from venial sin, if sincere, implies contrition of some kind. If, therefore, we assist devoutly at Mass with this desire, the power of atonement in the divine Sacrifice is so great that it will procure the remission of these sins. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an

account for it in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). There are many such venial faults which we have forgotten, for which we have not asked forgiveness.

It is a mistake to think that venial sin is a slight matter. Nothing can be slight that offends God in even the least degree. Venial sin is a stain, an ugly blotch upon the soul, rendering it unfit to stand in the presence of the light of God's infinite holiness. Thank God for giving us the means so easily to atone for these sins, so easily to secure pardon for them. Thank Him for giving us the Mass. If we had not this divine Sacrifice what a weight of sin we should have to carry before the judgment seat of God!

THE MASS PAYS OUR DEBT

When mortal sin is remitted and, with it, the eternal punishment, the temporal punishment ordinarily is remitted only in part. The remainder of this debt must be paid either in this world by works of religion, charity, or penance, or in the world to come by the purifying flames of purgatory. The best and most efficacious means of paying in this world our debt to God's justice is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Scarcely realizing how heavy is our debt to God's justice, many of us have little thought or care of discharging that debt.

So great is the power of the Mass, so all-embracing its effects that it frees our souls not only from the guilt of our innumerable venial sins, but also from the punishment these sins so richly deserve. St. John Damascene tells us: "The immaculate and unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass is for the healing of all wounds and the purification of all stains." Because the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the cross its effects are as plenteous and powerful. Therefore the Church tells us: "The fruits of that bloody Oblation are received most plentifully in this unbloody Oblation" (Council of Trent).

"There shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zach. 13:1). Jesus has opened to us a fountain to make our souls clean, pure, holy, that they might stand unashamed before His infinite holiness

in heaven. This fountain is the Mass. Come to it and be made clean. The power and value of the Mass is infinite, but our capacity to receive is finite. We will receive from the Mass the remission of our temporal punishments in some proportion to the dispositions with which we assist at Mass. A full, generous heart will receive much, a narrow, selfish soul less.

THE MASS INCREASES OUR MERIT

“Sow for yourselves in justice, and reap in the mouth of mercy, break up your fallow ground” (Osee 10:12). Now is the time to fill our lives with merit whilst we can; for “the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). Each day is given to us to work for heaven, to increase our merits now and our glory afterward. At the moment of death God closes the book. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). Make good use of the Mass now while still it is ours with all its treasures of merits.

Of all the good works we can do there is none so profitable and pleasing to God, so meritorious as the devout assistance at Mass. In the Mass we offer to God the humanity of Christ, His prayers, labors, sufferings, and death. One prayer, one sigh of sorrow, one pang of pain of the incarnate Son of God is enough to ransom a world. This is the treasure of the Mass that God puts at our disposal to offer to Him. If we believe this, and our faith tells us it is true, how can we neglect the Mass or assist at it without devotion?

The greater our merit on earth the greater will be our glory in heaven. When God closes the book of life our accounts are closed, and nothing can be added to them. Do we not wish those accounts to be full to overflowing? There is no better means of filling our souls with merit than the Mass, the treasury of merit. The Church tells us: “No other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself, wherein that life-giving Victim, by Whom we are reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests” (Council of Trent).

THE MASS INCREASES OUR GLORY IN HEAVEN

In heaven all possess the glory and happiness of the Beatific Vision: "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). But all do not possess this glory in the same degree. Our Lord tells us this: "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2). And St. Paul says that, "star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). The more we have pleased God on earth the closer we will be to Him in heaven, and the more we will see and be filled with glory and happiness of the Beatific Vision.

There are many things we can do to please God; the greatest and best of all is the service we give Him by assisting devoutly and often at Mass. The Church teaches us this: "We must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery" (Council of Trent). By sharing in offering the Mass we give to God more than our own good work. Through the ministry of the priest we offer to God the humanity of Christ with all that He did and suffered on earth. What can equal this?

The whole purpose of our lives on earth is to glorify God. God made us for Himself: "I have created him for My glory" (Isa. 43:7). The half hour spent in assisting devoutly at Mass fulfills more perfectly than all else the purpose of our existence, for it gives more praise to God, and increases the glory and happiness of our lives in heaven. As one climbing a lofty mountain by each step comes nearer to the peak glistening in the sunlight, so each Mass at which we assist devoutly will bring us closer to the vision of the unveiled splendor of the great God.

THE MASS: THE BEST MEANS OF HELPING OTHERS

The Mass is so prolific a source of grace that it helps not only those who devoutly assist at it but it also enables them to help others. The Church tells us this in one of the prayers of Mass shortly before the Consecration: "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, and of all here present for whom we offer or who offer up to Thee this Sacrifice of praise for them-

selves, their families and their friends." We not only pray for them, we share with them the merits and satisfaction of Christ that we gain by our devout assistance at Mass.

No prayers that we offer our friends, relatives, benefactors, or others will help them as much as one Mass heard in their behalf. When the holy Sacrifice is offered Jesus Himself pleads for the priest who officiates, for the people present who unite their prayers with those of the priest, and for all those for whom priest and people pray. What better return can we make to our benefactors than to hear Mass for them? What better consolation and help can we bring to the afflicted, the sick, the dying? What better way of obtaining the conversion of sinners and unbelievers?

How holy and all-powerful were the prayers that Jesus offered on earth! These same prayers He puts, as it were, in the hands of those present at Mass for themselves and for others. He does more. As on the cross He offered Himself for us, so in the Mass He repeats this offering and puts Himself in our hands to be offered for ourselves and for others. Can we question the efficacy of such a prayer, of such an offering? And this we can give to whom we wish. Give generously to others a share in what God so generously gives to us.

THE GREATEST HELP TO THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

"Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (Matt. 5:26). Purgatory is a place of suffering, for it is a place of punishment and of cleansing. Of punishment, because when the soul could pay its debt to God's justice it did not, now it must. Of cleansing, for the soul is soiled with the stains left by sins forgiven and by its many imperfections, remaining even to the hour of death; these make it unfit for heaven. This punishment and cleansing are accomplished by sufferings far greater than any earthly pains.

There are many ways in which, by God's mercy, we can help the souls in purgatory, lessening the time of their detention or, even, sometimes freeing them at once. The greatest and best of all is the Mass. The Church tells us: "This

Oecumenical Synod teaches that the souls detained in purgatory are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable Sacrifice of the altar" (Council of Trent). Two centuries before this pronouncement St. Thomas Aquinas said: "By no other oblation can the souls in purgatory be more speedily released than by the Sacrifice of the Mass."

"Thou also by the blood of Thy Testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zach. 9:11). This prophecy, referring directly to the blood of Christ shed on the cross, is equally true of His blood offered in the Mass, the same Sacrifice as that of the cross. Never was a cooling draught so grateful to the parched lips of a fever patient as Christ's precious blood is to the souls in purgatory, when offered for them in the Mass. Every Mass at which we assist devoutly will help these souls. Be generous; God will remember it in our hour of need.

ASSISTING AT MASS

THE BEST OF ALL GOOD WORKS

“WHAT shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy?” (Mich. 6:6.) Of all the prayers we say or good works we do assisting at Mass is the greatest and the best. It gives greater glory to God, pleases Him more, and brings more and greater blessings upon ourselves. Assisting at Mass is more than a prayer, it is the highest and greatest act of worship and praise that man can give to God. It is the most acceptable atonement, thanksgiving, and petition within man’s power to offer to God. By assisting at Mass we can give to God more than the angels can.

“What doth it profit God if thou be just? or what dost thou give Him if thy way be unspotted?” (Job 22:3.) “When you shall have done all these things that are commanded, you say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do” (Luke 17:10). In His infinite mercy God deigns to desire and to accept our poor service, and to reward it far beyond its deserts. But His mercy goes further. He puts at our disposal a gift more precious than anything else in creation, the humanity of His divine Son, that we may offer it to Him in the Mass.

Our devout assistance at Mass is the best answer to the question, “What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?” (Ps. 115:12.) Prepare well, that we may offer this gift properly. “If we must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous Mystery . . . it is also sufficiently clear that all industry and diligence should be applied to this purpose, that it may be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart and outward devotion and piety” (Council of Trent).

PREPARATION BEFORE MASS

“Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God” (Ecclus. 18:23). We are about to be present at and to take part in a most solemn and sacred mystery. We must prepare both mind and heart for the great privilege that is ours. If we are bidden to prepare our souls before prayer, how much more must we prepare for that which is greater than all prayers, the Sacrifice of the Mass! We are entering into another world, a world seen only by faith, so close will we be to God and the mysteries of the spiritual life.

“We will go into His tabernacle, we will adore in the place where His feet stood” (Ps. 131:7). Before we leave home and on our way to church think of what we are about to do. Not only are we coming into the real presence of God dwelling in the tabernacle, we are about to have a real part and share in the Offering that the priest makes in our name and behalf. We, creatures, are about to offer to God the humanity of His own divine Son. Pray for a strong, unquestioning faith: “I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:23).

Prepare our hearts, cleanse our souls from the least stain of sin. Make an act of perfect contrition, of humble, deep, earnest love for Him Whom we are about to offer to God in union with the priest. Do this before we enter the church, do it again at the *Confiteor* in the beginning of the Mass. How holy must he be who comes so close to God, who shares in the offering of the Mass! For God has said: “I will be sanctified in them that approach to Me, and I will be glorified in the sight of all the people” (Lev. 10:3).

PRESENCE AT MASS

Assisting at Mass requires that we be present both in body and in mind. The physical presence necessary to assist at Mass must be such that we are in touch with what is being done at the altar, we must be able in some measure to follow the Mass. The blind or the deaf can do this. They who hear the prayers of the Mass only over a radio, or who, from the

television screen in their homes see the priest at the altar, do not assist at Mass, for they are not actually present at the Sacred Oblation.

To assist at Mass it is not enough to be actually present in body, we must be present in mind also. How can he be said to take part in that to which he gives no thought, pays no attention, and of which he is not even conscious? Hence; they do not hear Mass who, at least during the principal parts of the Mass, sleep or permit their mind to dwell upon subjects wholly foreign to the Mass, or engage in conversation, distracting themselves and others from the divine Sacrifice.

When we enter the Church to assist at this holy and sublime Sacrifice leave the world outside, with its cares, interests, and distractions. These must have no place in the hearts of those who have come to assist at the unbloody repetition of the Sacrifice of Calvary. "Let all flesh be silent at the presence of the Lord; for He is risen up out of His holy habitation" (Zach. 2:13). Jesus has come upon the altar to be offered again in Sacrifice by us through the priest. Let our bodies and minds be occupied with this one thought and care, to assist well at this divine Offering. Then will we truly take part in the Mass.

MANY WAYS OF ASSISTING AT MASS

There are many ways of assisting at Mass; but all these ways should include the recognition of the fact that they who assist at Mass are not mere spectators, but take an actual and active part in the offering of the Sacrifice. They who pray during the Mass with little if any thought of this fact will fail to gather the full fruit of the Sacrifice, for they fail to enter fully into its offering. Should there be the obligation of hearing Mass they fulfill that obligation, but do not derive all the benefits they could obtain from a fuller participation.

Many of the faithful recite during Mass the rosary, the various litanies, or certain prayers of private devotion that especially appeal to them. Some join in or listen to the hymns that at times are sung during a low Mass. These are useful in the measure in which they draw our minds and hearts to the divine Sacrifice, and prepare us for the more solemn parts

of the Mass. At the Offertory, Consecration, and Communion all private devotions should give place to the one thought and prayer of uniting ourselves with the priest in offering to God the divine Victim of the Mass.

Private devotions during Mass are good, but they are not the best way of assisting at the divine Sacrifice. They are good because they raise our minds and hearts to God. But they are not the best way of assisting at Mass, for that only is the best way which gives us an actual share in the offering of the divine Sacrifice. Prayers of private devotion usually do not accomplish this, for they center often upon subjects other than the Mass. Choose the best way, the way that pleases God more, gives Him greater glory, and produces more fruit for ourselves.

THE BEST WAY OF ASSISTING AT MASS

The best and most fruitful way of assisting at Mass is to follow the priest, his words and actions. This is not difficult if we use a prayer book that gives us the exact translation of the words he uses, and a short explanation of the ceremonies of the Mass. In the "Ordinary of the Mass," which constitutes the more important parts, the prayers are the same every day of the year; in the other parts they vary with the different seasons and feasts. We should keep our minds fixed especially upon the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion, following with deep and reverent attention every word and act of the priest.

The prayers of the Mass surpass in sublimity and beauty of thought and expression all other prayers either of public or private devotion. The Church has fashioned a casket of rarest beauty to enshrine the priceless jewel of the divine Oblation. The more we read these prayers with reverent attention and care the more the splendor of their beauty will unfold before us. They are like the hymning of angel choirs, whose music transcends aught of this world even as heaven surpasses earth. These prayers transport us in spirit to the Last Supper and seat us by the side of Jesus Himself.

The main object of most of the prayers and ceremonies of

the Mass is to draw our minds and hearts to the purpose and meaning of the Mass, the divine Sacrifice, the offering, through the hands of the priest, of our blessed Saviour to His eternal Father. And this is done by words and acts that seem to belong to heaven rather than to earth. Enter into the spirit and life of these words and acts, absorb them as we follow them; and our knowledge and love of the Mass will be broader and deeper.

ASSIST AT MASS WITH FAITH

Come to Mass with deep, strong faith. We will need all the faith that God's grace will give to us, for at Mass we are in the presence of a mystery that faith alone can accept. Before this mystery sight, touch, and taste cannot help us. Only God's word can tell us that in the Mass the living, glorified humanity of Christ is present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, and under these appearances Jesus offers Himself to His Father as truly as He did once on the cross, when only His divinity was hidden.

If Jesus saw fit to do so He could open our eyes to see His glorified humanity in the Mass. It is related that He did this to a holy priest, Hugh of St. Victor, who had asked to see Him in the consecrated Host. But Jesus told him: "Because you have seen Me with your bodily eyes you have lost the merit of faith." Ask not to see Him; ask, rather, for the grace to believe with firm, unquestioning faith: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John 20:29).

Deep and impenetrable is the mystery of the Mass. It is not hard to believe that God can do this wondrous thing. It is not hard to believe that He has told us that He did: "This is My body; this is My blood. Do this in remembrance of Me." But it takes a strong and unfailing faith to comprehend what this truth means, that at the Mass the priest, and we through him, truly offer to God the living, glorified body and blood of Jesus as actually present before us as we are present before Him. Say to Him from our hearts: "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23).

ASSIST AT MASS WITH REVERENCE

In the Liturgy attributed to the Apostle St. James we read: Let everyone keep silence and tremble with awe, and withdraw his thoughts from earthly things, for the King of kings, the Lord of lords is about to come, to be immolated upon the altar and given as food to the faithful." And St. John Chrysostom tells us of the faithful at Mass, "As they crossed the threshold they stooped and kissed the ground; and during the celebration of the Mass the silence that prevailed could not have been more profound had the church been empty."

This reflects the spirit of reverence with which the early Christians assisted at Mass. Have we that same spirit? We should have, for it is as true now as it was then that "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). It should be more true for us than for David, who said: "I will come into Thy house, I will worship towards Thy holy temple in Thy fear" (Ps. 5:8). What does God think of those who attend Mass without attention or devotion, with little recognition of the sacredness of the divine Sacrifice enacted before them? How the angels must wonder that man can be so thoughtless and careless!

Were God to open our eyes during and after the Consecration and permit us to see what the angels see, we would bend low in fear and awe. "Let man be struck dumb, let the world tremble, let the very heavens be amazed when the Son of God lies upon the altar under the hand of the priest" (St. Francis). We know by faith that the humanity of Christ is being offered on the altar, and Christ is God. Where is the fear, the reverence, the deep and fervent devotion that should be ours before so tremendous a mystery?

ASSIST AT MASS WITH LOVE

"I have loved you, saith the Lord; and you have said: Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (Mal. 1:2.) Our minds recoil at the thought of the blindness and ingratitude of those who question God's love for them. Could any Christian stand under the cross of Christ, and ask "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" Can any Catholic assist at Mass, and remain unmoved,

cold, indifferent before the same Sacrifice as that of Calvary? At Mass, in an unbloody manner, the same Victim is as truly offered as once He was offered in a bloody manner. Can we ask, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The same love that Jesus had for us when He hung suffering and dying on the cross He now has in the Mass. The same love that kept Him on the cross now keeps Him on our altars, to be sacrificed for us not once only but again and again, that the fruits of the Mass might be applied to us continually. Who can understand the depths of a love such as this, a love of which only God is capable?

We who come to Jesus in the Mass know something of this love, our hearts have been brought in contact with this "furnace of Divine Charity." But what is our response to this knowledge, to this contact? Have we opened wide the door of our souls, to receive abundantly the stream of grace and love from the Mass to us? Tell Him of our love for Him Who so loved us, Who has done so much for us on Calvary's cross, and now in the Mass. Tell Him that we hunger for His love, for the grace to love Him more and more. And our souls will be filled.

ASSIST AT MASS WITH HUMILITY

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). With wondering awe the angels looked down upon the cross of Calvary. On that cross they saw a Man Whom they knew to be their God, the glory and the brightness of heaven. With awe and wonder, never ceasing, ever increasing, they behold their blessed Lord in the Mass, again offering Himself to His Father, in outward appearance renewing the humiliation of death by coming on the altar under the separate appearance of bread and wine.

If we had stood at the foot of the cross of Christ could we be anything but humble, knowing that our sins had brought Him to the cross? "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). In the Mass Jesus again offers Himself for us as truly as He did on the cross, in

external appearance humbling Himself under the Sacramental veil of lifeless matter. Knowing this, can we assist at Mass and not be humble? In the presence of a love so great, so undeserved do not our hearts cry out? "My God, I am confounded and ashamed to lift up my face to Thee" (i Esd. 9:6).

"Who am I, O Lord God . . . that Thou shouldst give such things to me?" (1 Par. 17:16.) "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10). "What is a man that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job 7:17.) This should be our thought, our prayer when we assist at Mass. We find nothing in ourselves to make us worthy of a love that goes so far as to bring Jesus first to the cross and then to our altars, to be offered a Victim for us. Before so great a love we bow low in humble adoration, praise, and thanksgiving.

THANK GOD FOR THE MASS

Do we come to Mass on Sundays and holydays only because we must? Do we come to Mass then and on other days mostly from natural motives? Or do we come to Mass whenever we can gladly, thanking God that we can, thanking Him for the gift of the Mass? And during Mass do we tell Him how happy and grateful we are to be allowed to unite with the priest in offering the divine Sacrifice, that Jesus might pay our debts to God, and that we might receive the many and great fruits of the Mass?

Have we ever thought what our spiritual lives would be if God withdrew His gift of the Mass? No longer, then, could we offer to God the supreme worship and praise, the atonement, the thanksgiving and petition that are the essentials of true religion. No longer could we offer Him the humanity of His own divine Son, the only offering worthy of God's acceptance. No longer would we have at our free disposal this ever flowing fountain of all graces and blessings to enrich our spiritual lives. No longer would Jesus dwell upon our altars: "Yea, and woe to them, when I shall depart from them" (Osee 9:12).

"A Christian cannot exist without holy Mass." This was

the answer of a certain Christian martyr in the early persecutions of the Church; and for that answer he suffered torment and death. We are not called on to suffer and die for the privilege of having the Mass. But we are called on to appreciate and love and be grateful for the gift of the Mass. Thank God for every opportunity He gives us to assist at Mass, to offer the Sacrifice of supreme worship. "May God . . . give you all a heart to worship Him . . . with a great heart and a willing mind" (2 Mach. 1:2, 3).

MAKE GOOD USE OF THE MASS

"She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God" (Wisd. 7:14). These words spoken of spiritual wisdom apply even more to the Mass, God's greatest gift to man, bringing graces and blessings upon our daily lives. The Mass gives us in the spiritual life and order all the blessings promised in the Old Law: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city and blessed in the field. . . . Blessed shalt thou be coming in and going out. . . . The Lord will send forth a blessing . . . upon all the works of thy hands" (Deut. 28:3, 6, 8). Blessed is the day begun with holy Mass.

Every gift and grace of God is given to be used, not hidden away. The servant who "dugged into the earth and hid his lord's money" (Matt. 25:18), instead of putting it to profit, was cast out "into the exterior darkness." Make good use of God's gift of the Mass. Inconvenience, difficulty, even hardships are but a small price to gain so great a good as the Mass and the blessings it brings. Jesus told us: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Seek first the Mass; God will give the rest.

No hour of the day is more precious, more profitable than that in which we assist at Mass. And this not for ourselves only but for those whom we wish to help: our families, friends, benefactors, living or dead. Remember the prayer shortly before the Consecration: "Be mindful, O Lord . . . of all here present . . . for whom we offer or who offer to Thee this Sacrifice of praise for themselves, their families and their friends." Not we alone but Jesus Himself prays for them.

And as often as we can, have Masses said for them; there is no greater gift we can give.

OUR MASS AND OUR COMMUNION

Jesus at the Last Supper instituted the Holy Eucharist both as a Sacrifice and a Sacrament. At the first Mass He enjoined upon the Apostles, "Take ye, and eat. Drink ye all of this." Is not this an indication of His will that they who, through the priest, assist in offering the Sacrifice of the Mass should also receive the divine Victim in Communion? The Church teaches us that without the Communion of the celebrant the Mass would be incomplete; and, to satisfy the obligation of hearing Mass, the faithful should remain until the Communion of the priest is finished.

Some there are who, not realizing the close connection between the Sacrifice and the Communion, do not understand that the fullness of their participation in the Mass is acquired by the reception of Holy Communion during the Mass. The essential requirements for receiving Holy Communion are freedom from mortal sin and the desire to receive our Lord. To this the Church has added the command to be fasting from midnight. The best preparation for Communion is assisting in the offering of the divine Sacrifice. This pleases God far more than all prayers of private devotion.

It was the custom of the Christians in the first centuries of the Church to receive Communion whenever they assisted at Mass. May God grant that this custom be revived. Let this be our custom; for then, by our Sacramental union with Jesus, we will complete and perfect our share in the offering of the divine Victim in the Mass. If, for sufficient reason, we receive Communion outside of Mass, unite in spirit with Christ offering Himself in the Mass. And whenever we assist at Mass communicate at least spiritually if we cannot do so Sacramentally. Let not our Mass and our Communion be separated.

THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE MASS

THE ORDINARY OF THE MASS

SOME of the prayers of the Mass change according to the season and feasts of the Church's calendar, but the majority of the prayers of the Mass remain unchanged through all the feasts and seasons. These prayers constitute what is called the Ordinary of the Mass, that is, the prayers ordinarily said throughout the year. These prayers bear upon the sacrificial nature of the Mass, rather than upon the circumstances of the feast or season. They form by far the greater part of the Mass and all of the essential and even principal parts.

The Ordinary of the Mass comprises the prayers said at the foot of the altar, the Psalm with its antiphon, and the Confiteor with the short prayers that follow. Then, at the altar, the Kyrie, the Gloria, the two brief prayers immediately before the Gospel, and the Credo on Sundays and the greater feasts. Following these are the prayers when the priest offers first the bread then the wine to be used for the Consecration. After these are several prayers, including the Preface which ushers in the Canon, the most solemn part of the Mass.

Throughout the rest of the Mass, excepting the prayers called the Communion and the Postcommunion, all belong to the Ordinary of the Mass. These prayers, most of them comprising the Canon, rise to a sublimity of beauty and solemnity revealing something of the mystery of the Mass, but only to those who read them with faith and love, with deep and reverent attention. We are about to enter into the holy of holies, into the mystery of the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Only the Church, the Spouse of Christ, can lead us now. Follow her; follow her prayers. They will lead us into another world, where men "walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

THE PROPER OF THE MASS

The Proper of the Mass is the name given to the prayers which change according to the season or feast of the liturgical year. These prayers reflect the sentiments occasioned by the feast or season in which the Mass is celebrated. Several of these prayers go back as far as the latter part of the fifth century. The Proper of the Mass comprises the Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gradual, Gospel, Offertory, the Secret prayer, the Communion prayer, and the Postcommunion. Though there are fifteen Prefaces they do not vary greatly, and their general structure is the same.

The Introit, meaning *Entrance*, originally was the entrance song chanted in the solemn procession to the altar for the celebration of Pontifical High Mass, and dates back to the sixth century. Of equal antiquity is the Collect, a prayer in which the Church petitions for special graces corresponding to the season or feast. In ancient days it was called *Oratio ad collectam*, or, Assembly prayer. The Gradual, following the Epistle, was formerly an entire psalm, but now only one or two verses are sung. The Offertory prayer originally consisted of an antiphon or psalm sung while the faithful brought their offerings to the altar. Only the antiphon now has been retained.

The Secret prayer is so called because it is said in a low voice. As early as the fifth century there is mention of this prayer in the Mass. It was then called, "prayer over the offerings," that is, the offerings of the people. The Communion prayer, now only a brief antiphon, in the early days was a psalm sung while the faithful received Communion. The Postcommunion, immediately following the Communion prayer, until the eleventh century terminated the Mass. In those early days it was called the *Oratio ad complendum*, the concluding prayer.

Know the prayers of the Mass better, and we will love them more.

PREPARED AS A BRIDE

The Mass is the greatest and best offering that man can make to God. It is the highest form of worship, of prayer

and good works. Therefore, it is to be expected that the prayers of the Mass should be the most exalted and beautiful expression of the loftiest sentiments of the human mind and heart aided by divine grace. And so they are. The Church has breathed into these prayers the spirit of love, desire, humility, contrition, joy, and grateful praise. She has put into them the faith and love she herself has for her divine Spouse.

“And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Apoc. 21:2). To those who assist at the divine Sacrifice with strong faith and earnest love the Mass is “prepared as a bride”; not, indeed, revealing to mortal eyes its transcending glory, yet permitting something of its beauty to shine upon their souls. The prayers of the Mass help us to a clearer insight into this wondrous mystery of divine love. They lift us up from earthly surroundings, and bring us into the hallowed presence of the Victim on the altar.

The prayers of the Mass are a veritable treasure, yet few grasp fully their power and beauty. To those who read then with attention and reverence they unfold the divine drama of the Mass. In language simple yet sublime they lead us step by step to the culmination of the Sacrifice by the Consecration and to its completion in the Communion. In these prayers the Church seems to copy in sublimity of thought and simplicity of expression the method of her divine Founder in His teachings. Could she follow a better example? Learn, then, the treasure we have in the prayers of the Mass.

ENTER INTO THE MASS

We whose faith and love are strong and true, should not be content with doing what we must do to please God, but rather seek to do all that we can. We cannot be content with merely hearing Mass, with being merely a spectator. Our faith and love will lead us to enter into the Mass, to take part in it, to unite with the priest in the offering of the holy Sacrifice. To do this we must follow the prayers of the Mass with attention and devotion. Read them wholly or in part,

but read them as one who is listening to the voice of God. For these are the prayers of the Church of God.

Each prayer of the Mass is like a diamond with many facets, is like a rose with many petals. Each facet, each petal has a beauty all its own. To capture that beauty these prayers must be understood. Their meaning must sink into the mind that their beauty may sink into the heart. The more we understand these prayers the better equipped we are to enter into the Mass, to take our part and share in it. Ask God to open the eyes of our souls to recognize the meaning and the spiritual beauty of the prayers of the Mass.

These prayers are not known and studied as much as they should be, and, therefore, are not appreciated and loved as they deserve to be. Of all prayers those of the Mass are the most sacred and sublime. They are the prayers of the Church, and certainly are to be preferred to prayers of private devotion. If we understand the prayers of the Mass we will admire and love them. If we use them we will gain a better knowledge of what the Mass really is, we will gain a greater love for the Mass as we enter more closely into its mysterious depths.

HOW SHALL WE THANK THEE, O LORD?

Only in heaven will we see the magnitude of the mercy and love and goodness of God in the gift of the Holy Eucharist. He comes to us, He stays with us in His Real Presence, to be our guest, our companion, and our refuge. From the tabernacle He calls to us: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11:28). How shall we thank Thee for so great a love, O divine Prisoner of Love?

Was it not enough that Jesus gave His body and blood to be the ransom for our souls, to be the price of our redemption? Was it not enough that He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," that "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8)? All this He thought not enough to satisfy His thirst for souls, His love for us. He gave us His body and blood to be also our food and drink: "He that eateth My flesh

and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:55, 56). How shall we thank Him for the gift of Holy Communion?

Do we realize that in the Mass, Jesus offers Himself to His eternal Father for us as truly as once He offered Himself on the Cross? In the Mass Jesus does not suffer nor die: “Christ . . . dieth now no more” (Rom. 6:9). Nonetheless, in the Mass the body and blood of the Saviour are on the altar after the Consecration, and are offered in sacrifice by Jesus Christ, both Priest and Victim. O blessed Lord, our Guest, our Food, our Victim of sacrifice, how shall we thank Thee for a love so great, so divine, for this gift of infinite worth and power, the gift of the Holy Eucharist?