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By
Rev. James O'Dwyer, S. J.
Xavier College, Kew.



Mission Church Press,
Boston, Mass.

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*** WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL,**

Archbishop of Boston

The Blessed Eucharist

A HOLY THURSDAY LECTURE*

“And He said to them: With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.”—(Luke xxii., 15.)

Nothing leaves so deep an impression on the normally-constituted human being as the last solemn scene with a dearly-loved friend. It is an impression which time cannot efface. Every look, every word, every gesture of the revered one is indelibly engraved on the memory, and enshrined for ever as a sacred treasure in the very sanctuary of the heart.

The scene and the words and the actions we have met this evening to commemorate impressed themselves so vividly on the consciousness of the first disciples of Jesus, leavened so completely the religious life of the early Christian Church, that all the revolutions of the centuries have not obliterated their effect, nor lessened their significance for us, His disciples of to-day. For, like the Apostles in the supper-room, we

* Delivered at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on Holy Thursday, 1907.

have assembled, as followers of the same Master, to commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with the chosen twelve, and to meditate on His last will and testament to the human race. And, as the Church in her liturgy rehearses the first act in the second drama of the Passion of the God-man, we recall the words and actions which she has treasured up for us—words and actions of awful import, which have determined our relations to God for all future time. When we cast our glance backward, what a strange retrospect it is! There is nothing like it in human history. We have met in this Cathedral, dedicated to God in honor of St. Patrick, nineteen hundred years after the event we are commemorating, and ten thousand miles away from the scene. And for what purpose? One in faith and in apostolic continuity with the Church of St. Patrick in the fifth, and with the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch in the first, century, we have met, in the spirit of gratitude, to perpetuate the memory of a divine gift to man, a gift which involves a historic divine fact and a mystery. The historic fact involved is that Jesus Christ took His last Paschal supper with His Apostles in Jerusalem on the night before His death; the mystery, that at that supper He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood, and commanded His Apostles to do the same for all time in commemoration of Him.

“One day with the Lord,” St. Peter tells us, “is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

With His Church it is the same, for she has a vivid, conscious memory of her own past career, reaching back to that supper-room on the hill of Sion, and by the living stream of her unbroken tradition she unites us across the centuries with the momentous events of that last Paschal meal. It is as real to her to-day as it was to John while he reclined on the bosom of Jesus, as it was to Peter when the Master washed his feet. She was present in that cenacle, and but reminds us to-day of what she saw and knows. For her life is continuous with the life of the Apostles, who were consecrated ministers of Christ on that first Holy Thursday. She admits no breach in continuity, no flaw in the title-deeds, no change in essential doctrines, no forgetfulness of facts.

Hence, when we assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we know that it is our sublime privilege to witness the great reality from which the anniversary commemoration of Holy Thursday derives its supreme significance. And yet, year after year, the wide world over, true Christians meet on this day to quicken their faith in, and kindle their love for, the heirloom of Christ to His children, the Bread of Life, the Holy Eucharist. "The love of Christ constrains us." We are drawn by the chains of love and gratitude to dwell, in heartfelt devotion, on that scene "before the festival day of the Pasch," when "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should pass out of this world, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them unto the end."

As it is our privilege to share in that inheritance of Christ's undying love, so is it our duty, as His followers, to endeavor to realize in some feeble way—for we can never fathom its infinite depth—the mystery of the divine romance by which Jesus Christ died “for us men, and for our salvation,” and yet contrived, by divine ingenuity, to satisfy the desire of His Sacred Heart, to remain “with the children of men.”

If we know something of His Eucharistic life and love we shall be morally constrained to love Him in return, and imitate His Eucharistic self-sacrifice. For knowledge is a condition of love, and love of imitation.

(I.) I propose, then, to put before you, for your pious consideration as true believers, God's revealed word from the New Testament, by which we can prove historically:—(1) That Christ clearly promised (John vi.), a year before His death, in the synagogue of Capharnaum, to give His body and blood to His disciples as the food of their souls. (2) That a year later, in the supper-room of Jerusalem, in fulfilment of His promise, He as clearly instituted the Blessed Eucharist on “the very night in which He was betrayed. (Mat. xxvi., Luke xxii., Mark xiv., 1 Cor. x. and xi.) (3) That St. Paul clearly teaches the same doctrine as an already existing Sacrament and Sacrifice in the infant Church. (1 Cor., x. and xi.)

(II.) I shall try to point out how Christian tradition teaches us that Christ's clear, literal promise and

institution, and St. Paul's definite statement of the same doctrine was accepted in the plain, literal sense by the Christian Church, with hardly a dissentient voice, for fifteen hundred years. For we shall find St. Ignatius of Antioch, at the dawn of the second century (about 107 A. D.), teaching exactly the same Eucharistic doctrine as Pius X. in the beginning of the twentieth. And from St. Ignatius to Pius X. the Catholic Church has clung lovingly and tenaciously to her Master's richest and most cherished gift. She has kept all His sacred words, "pondering them in her heart," and evolving their full significance.

MAN'S SPIRITUAL CRAVING FOR GOD.

Before attempting to draw out the proofs from Scripture and tradition for the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, it may be profitable for us to dwell for a brief space on the fitness of this stupendous gift for man's spiritual food. Without revelation the human mind could not possibly have conceived an idea of the lavishness of God's love in this mystery. But revelation has taught us much about the ineffable love of God for man, and the consequent elevation of man to a supernatural destiny. Viewed historically in the light of God's revealed scheme for our eternal happiness with Himself, man's nature was constituted with reference to the supernatural order. That is God's design in his regard. Hence, man's soul, whether as created *in* grace, or as fallen *from* grace,

or restored *to* grace, has ever breathed a supernatural atmosphere; man's heart has ever experienced an exigency, a felt want, for God; man's imagination has ever been haunted by ideals of a higher life, by dreams of a happier land. From the long annals of the human race, and the sad records of human sin and corruption, we can glean this consoling truth, that man can rise superior to his environment. The "shades of the prison-house" do not close completely around him. In his better moments his soul is conscious of his divine origin: "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with honor and glory."

The noblest thing, therefore, in man's nature, that which raises him above himself, is the craving of his spirit, the yearning of his soul, for union with God. His spiritual nature, fashioned for God, and by God, but imprisoned in "this tenement of clay," is ever struggling to burst its barriers, ever yearning for something which the finite cannot give, ever aspiring to soar aloft to regions where it can breathe a purer air. And all the ravings of Materialists, all the blasphemies of Atheists, cannot stifle that natural longing, that divine discontent. "The fool says in his heart: 'There is no God.'" The Agnostic would fain persuade the Christian that "there is no salvation for him in his God."

But a voice from out the depths of that spiritual nature, created to breathe the breath of God's nos-

trils, and bask in the sunshine of His favor, pleads, trumpet-tongued, against such blasphemy, and gives the lie to every crude attempt to bolster up materialism. The nations of the earth may wander for a time in darkness and the shadow of death. The princes and the peoples may meet together and "devise vain things against the Lord and His Christ." They may, in the France of to-day, as in the France of one hundred years ago, proscribe the worship of God, and blot out His holy Name from their annals.

But the reaction must come, the infinite void will be felt, the God-implanted instinct will clamor for satisfaction. Man's spiritual nature has not changed, nor God's goodness and love, nor the essential relations between the creature and his Creator. The world and the devil have not yet devised anything that can satisfy the heart of man.

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD.

St. Augustine's diagnosis of the human heart is as true to-day as it was fifteen hundred years ago: "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." And St. Augustine is but echoing the sentiment of Royal David fourteen hundred years further back in the world's history: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath *thirsted after the strong, living God.*" (Ps. 41.)

In fact, man has ever, in all his blind gropings after truth, in all his crude attempts at religion, been striving after union with God. The wonderful, the mysterious, the supernatural he must have, for the simple reason that his soul was created with that innate longing—created *with a capacity* for God which nothing short of God can satisfy, a spiritual void which nothing else can fill. Or, to change the metaphor, the soul is an instrument so delicately attuned that no touch but the touch of God can wake its sweetest harmonies. Nature, we are told, abhors a vacuum in the material order, and in the spiritual order of things there is a vacuum in man's soul which God alone can fill.

“My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God.” Rob man of Christ and the true religion, and he will seek an outlet for his spiritual cravings in spooks or spiritualistic seances or revivalist excitement. Deny him the Bread of Life, and he will feed on the husks of faith-healing or the religion of humanity. Break off his communications with the supernatural, and he will attempt to re-establish communications by some unlawful channels, or rummage amid the garbage of some degrading superstition. For man has an *incurable dissatisfaction* with the material and finite, a God-given hunger and thirst for the spiritual, the divine. It is a law of his nature. Once elevated to the supernatural order, he cannot rest satisfied with the merely natural. Having once drunk at the “foun-

tain of living waters," he cannot slake his thirst at "broken cisterns." Having once tasted the wine of gladness, he has no relish, in his higher moments of spiritual exhilaration, for the impure, unsavory dregs. Having once felt the gentle touch and healing balm of the true Physician of his soul, the Good Samaritan who poured oil and wine into his gaping wounds, he is impatient with the ministrations of the spiritual quack.

THE INCARNATION A UNION WITH HUMANITY.

For thousands of years the patriots and prophets and saints of the Old Law sighed and prayed for this union with God. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just." (Isaias 45, 8.) "Let the earth open and bud forth a Saviour." It was the constant burden of the Psalmist's song. It assumed definite form and shape in the visions of the prophets. And, at last, it all but found complete fruition in Simeon's cry of exultation, the "Nunc Dimittis."

But how the great God was to condescend to satisfy this craving for union, how this spiritual exigency of the soul for the divine was to be sated, "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had it ever entered into the heart of sainted patriarch or prophet to conceive." The divine contrivance of the mystery of the Incarnation, by which the Creator, Jehovah the All Holy, was to become Emmanuel God in our midst,

exceeds our finite grasp. It was bound to be so, for man could form no adequate conception of the infinite love of God. A God whom we could fully comprehend would not be God at all. A religion without mysteries—a purely natural religion—is a mere hypothesis. But once admit, on the authority of revelation, the divine economy of love in the Incarnation; once realize your belief that God's Eternal Son clothed Himself in our frail flesh, and has the blood of our sinful humanity running sinless in His veins, and any other manifestation of love divine, even the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, is but a corollary. For, with such a revelation of God's love and condescension before us, we can only say, in awful reverence: The love of Christ *could* do all this! and what He *could*, He *did*.

Remember, however, that we must understand the Incarnation in all the fulness of its revealed contents as defined by Christ's Church. It is an objective historical fact, or stage, in God's dealings with mankind. But it is infinitely more than a mere historical fact—no matter how momentous and far-reaching in its consequences—that took place nineteen hundred years ago. It is the great abiding reality of our supernatural existence. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loves them unto the end." "Behold I am with you all days." Christ did not labor and love for one generation. What He did He did for all time.

THE EUCHARIST A UNION WITH THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL.

Now, in the economy of divine grace and salvation, God's dealings are with the individual soul. Consequently, when the Redeemer's earthly career was drawing to a close, and men were to be deprived of His visible personal influence, it does not surprise us, once we grasp the meaning of the Incarnation, that the love that contrived so intimate a union with poor fallen humanity should devise some divine plan for ever abiding with the individual human soul. "His delight is to be with the sons of men." "For love is a force that ever tends towards union." And, besides, as we have seen, man has a God-given capacity for union with his Creator: "My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God." (Ps. 41.) This scheme, by which the graces of the Incarnation were to be applied to the individual soul, Jesus Christ left us in the Sacraments which He instituted, but particularly in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the continuation of the Incarnation every day in our midst. In the Incarnation God had united Himself directly with an individual human nature; in the Blessed Eucharist He unites Himself directly with all men who will. For "the Eucharist is the stretching forth towards each one of us of the Incarnation of our God." Accordingly, Jesus, who knew how little the Jews, owing to the hardness of their hearts, would realize the power of His love and the nature of His greatest gift to man,

took care to prepare their minds beforehand for the stupendous miracle.

A year before His Passion He was teaching in the neighborhood of Capharnum, as we read in John vi. Five thousand men followed Him into the desert to hear His teaching. As they hung enraptured on His words they forgot the pangs of hunger. But the Lord of Life did not forget them. He took five loaves, blessed and distributed them. And when the five thousand had eaten the fragments filled twelve baskets. Here was a striking type of the multilocation of Christ's Body in the Blessed Sacrament, and a preparation for the great contest of the morrow. If the dead bread could, by His mere fiat, increase and multiply to supply man's animal wants, why could not the living body of the God-Man be in many places at the same time to minister to man's spiritual needs?

THE SYNAGOGUE OF CAPHARNUM— THE PROMISE.

(John vi.)

The scene of the great discussion on the Real Presence is laid in the Synagogue of Capharnum. "These things He said teaching in the Synagogue of Capharnum," presumably on the Sabbath.

After the multiplication of the loaves the multitude crossed over the Sea of Galilee to Capharnum. Jesus, to escape the plaudits of the multitude, fled into

the mountain alone; but by another prodigy—walking on the waters—He joined His Apostles in their boat, and showed His power over Nature in order to reassure His disciples. The multitude whom He had fed in the desert were anxiously looking out for the Wonder Worker, and when they questioned Him: “Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?” knowing that He had not set out in any of the boats, Jesus opened the ever-memorable discourse.

He promised that, as in the multiplication of the loaves He had given the *food* that perisheth, so in the future He would give them His Flesh and His Blood, a meat which should endure unto life everlasting.

Listen to His words, and see if plainer, simpler, more direct language could possibly have been chosen to express the Catholic dogma of the Real Presence?

He begins by insisting on the need of faith in Him, and surely He had just given proof of His power and His love! “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent.” “He that believeth in Me hath life everlasting.” (V. 47.)

Then He proceeded to lay down His doctrine in a series of startlingly clear statements—so clear that His audience might *refuse to believe* in His divine power, but could *not possibly misunderstand* His meaning. He left no loophole, no need for further elucidation, and they asked for none. The issue was too clear—faith in His miraculous promise or rejection of Him Whom but yesterday they were ready to

take by force and make King. And remark, He is not dealing with captious enemies, to whom He might speak in parables, but to hitherto enthusiastic followers, whom He would fain conciliate and win—but not with sacrifice of His own doctrine or of their free will.

NO COMPROMISE.

“I am the living bread which *came down from heaven.*” At this they murmured, saying: “Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph?”

“If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.”

“The bread that I *will* give you is My *flesh.*” Here we have the real issue.

“The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying: How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”
(V. 53.)

Did Jesus, with all His intense desire to win their souls, retract or soften or explain away the harshness, to a Jewish ear, of the phrase: “Eat My flesh and drink My blood?” On the contrary, in language royal, imperative, unyielding, He replied, and in six several ways insisted:

“Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.”

“He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

“For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”

“He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him.”

“As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth *Me* the same shall live by Me.”

This was, to Jewish ears, *harsh* language, and Jesus knew that, but certainly not obscure or difficult to understand. It admits of no compromise. There is no escape from its inexorable reiteration, no hope of explaining it away. They must face the issue, and face it here and now. Their faith is challenged. The critical moment for decision has arrived for them—as so often happens in the lives of men of our day—either to acknowledge Jesus Christ as God, or reject Him.

He means it to be a crisis, hence His extraordinary miracles to prepare them. And *they* feel that it is the parting of the ways, perhaps the final, irretrievable step in life. They thoroughly realized the demand made on their faith, as their murmuring shows: “How can this *Man* give us His *flesh* to eat?” And with full consciousness that that refusal to believe meant breaking with their Master and idol, they freely came to their decision:—“This is a harsh saying, and who can bear it?” Not “who can understand His Meaning?” but, seeing the drift of it, “Who can endure the thought of it?”

BREAKING WITH JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus, "knowing in Himself" that they were making shipwreck of their faith, by a last effort of love, as if throwing a last plank to men who were sinking, endeavors to kindle the dying embers of faith. "Doth this scandalize you? What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" thus reminding them of His divinity and the need of faith. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." But it is too late. Their carnal hearts blinded them to any but a temporal Messiah. The flesh prevails. The spiritual faith that quickeneth is dead. St. John sadly chronicles their fateful decision. "After this *many* of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." What a realistic picture of the shallow, materialistic unbelief of our own days! What a harrowing, tragic parting of the ways! What an awful revelation of the power of man's free will to resist God!

Now, I ask you a simple question. Is it possible for any man to read this narrative, with its relentless repetitions, its uncompromising reiterations, its disregard of consequences, and assert that Jesus Christ does *not* clearly, definitely, relentlessly, uncompromisingly, and in the very plainest words teach the doctrine of the Real Presence and *promise* to give His Flesh and His Blood as the food of our souls?

But Jesus Christ is God, and God's promises must needs be fulfilled. Hence, from His literal promise we

unhesitatingly argue a *literal fulfilment*. For us, thank God, there is no difficulty. When the modern scoffer or caviller puts the difficulty: "How can *this Man* give us His *flesh* to eat?" we reply, with all the earnestness of our faith: Because *this Man* is God. Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world—your faith."

THE INSTITUTION. (Mat. xxvi., 26-8.)

Let us now advance from literal promise to literal performance, and try to picture to ourselves another scene, a further stage in the manifestation of Divine Love. It is a year later—the very night on which He was betrayed—and the scene is laid in the guest-chamber or cenacle on Mount Sion, in Jerusalem. It is the last Paschal Supper of Jesus with the twelve alone, for types and shadows are now fading away before reality and substance. Judas is in their midst, at least during the legal meal, his heart black with treachery, his will hardened against Divine Grace. The coming events have cast their shadows back on the Apostles. There is a tense feeling of awe and sadness stealing over them.

Before the legal supper is ended Jesus rises from table and washes His disciples' feet. The moment has come that He desired with such intense desire. The new Paschal Lamb is Christ Himself, the Lamb of God. For He is going to change bread and wine

into His Body and Blood. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them *unto the end.*" The dearest token of that love is reserved for last.

What is the evidence for the institution—for the Real Presence? Besides the narrative of the promise, which we have already dealt with in the sixth chapter of St. John, we have four distinct and substantially concordant accounts in the New Testament, viz., the narratives of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the independent account which St. Paul "received of the Lord," in which he treats of the Blessed Eucharist as an existing fact in the Church—a Sacrament and Sacrifice, with a ritual in the course of formation.

We shall follow the account of St. Matthew, an eye-witness:—

"And whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye and eat; this is My Body. 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 (is now being shed) for many unto remission of sins." (Mat. xxvi., 26-8.)

THE PLAIN LITERAL SENSE.

Whether we view this narrative on its own merits, or in the light of the previous promise, the conclusion is irresistible that Jesus Christ meant what He said. Surely this is no time for trifling with His friends.

His hour is already come. For the Apostles the question was already settled a year before in the Synagogue of Capharnum—it was then closed once and for ever. He spoke in the *literal* sense. They asked no question, they raised no difficulty. They acquiesced and adored. The Evangelists, in narrating the incident, add no explanation. The meaning is too evident.

“The bread that I *will* give you is My *flesh*,” He had said a year ago. And now it is an accomplished fact: “This is My Body.” Divine Power has but executed what Divine Truth had promised. It was bound to be so, for it was the promise of God.

As to His *literal* meaning, no one had any doubt either in the promise or the performance. The hundreds, or perhaps thousands, in and around the Synagogue of Capharnum, who “went back and walked with Him no more,” understood Him in the *literal* sense. It was His divinity they doubted. The Apostles and Evangelists understood Him in the *literal* sense, and believed. The Christian Church for fifteen centuries, with hardly a dissentient voice, understood Him in the *literal* sense. Even Luther was constrained to admit, in spite of his perverse ingenuity and his eager desire to deny the Real Presence (in order, as he says, “to injure Popery”), that “he was caught without any way of escape.” The text of the Gospel was too plain for any but the *literal* sense. Hence, in his usual unmeasured language (which

he did not always reserve for the Pope), he says: "The devil seems to have mocked those to whom the father of lies suggested so grotesque a heresy, and one so adverse to Scripture, as that of the Zwinglians," who denied the Real Presence. And in language too ludicrous and too lurid for the Christian pulpit, he condemns those who tried to explain Our Lord's plain words, "This is My Body," by "This is a symbol of My Body."

When Protestants, in order to explain away the literal sense, asserted that the Syrian language had no phrase to express "symbol," "type," and so represented Our Lord as saying: "This is My Body," when He meant to say: "This is a *symbol* of My Body," Cardinal Wiseman replied by producing more than fifty possible ways of expressing the phrase, "This is a symbol of My Body," in the Syrian tongue.

THE EUCHARIST IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

(I Corinth., x. and xi.)

Thus far I have put before you the *promise* of the Holy Eucharist in the Synagogue of Capharnum, and the fulfilment of that promise by the *institution* of the Eucharist in the supper-room in Jerusalem. I can do no more than make a brief reference to its *use* in the early Church, and so shall confine myself to St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (ch. x. and xi.). St. Paul assumes the Real Presence and the use of the

Holy Eucharist as an established and recognized institution among Christians—at Corinth he had established it himself. Hence he argues from the Real Presence as from a central doctrine of Christianity, a revealed fact about which there was no dispute, and could be no doubt.

It will be sufficient to cite his words. He is writing to some Christians at Corinth, whom a few years before he had converted from the worship of idols, and who are still living in the midst of the idolatrous sacrifices and impurities of paganism. Take no part in their sacrifices, he warns them; eat not of the meats, drink not of the wine offered to idols, you who are partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ. Listen to his clear, explicit words:

“The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the partaking of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one body, all that partake of one bread. Behold Israel according to the flesh: are not they that eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you be made partakers with devils.

“You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils. You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of devils.”

His argument is:—You Christians, who are made one with Christ by partaking of His Body and Blood,

how can it be lawful for you to partake of the wine and meat of the idols and thus be made one with devils?

THIS SACRIFICE—CHRIST THE REAL VICTIM.

And he proves his case by a reason from analogy which would have no force unless he supposes the presence of a real victim.

With the Jews, he says, it was a real altar, a real sacrifice, and, therefore, a real victim.

With the Gentiles, it was a real altar, a real sacrifice, and, therefore, a real victim.

Similarly with the Corinthians, it was a real altar, a real sacrifice, and, therefore, a real victim.

Now this real Victim, Christ in the case of the Corinthians, supposes the *Real Presence* of the Victim. For you cannot sacrifice an absent victim.

(B.) In chapter xi. St. Paul is condemning some abuses that had crept into the Corinthian custom of celebrating the Eucharist. "In this I praise you not. For I *have received* of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night on which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke and said: *Take ye and eat*; this is My Body which shall be delivered for you. This do for the *commemoration* of Me.

"In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: *This chalice* is the New Testament

in My Blood; this do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as ye shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, ye shall *show the death* of the Lord until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord *unworthily* shall be *guilty* of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man *prove* himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment (damnation) to himself, not *discerning* the Body of the Lord.”

Now (1), here we have St. Paul, writing about twenty-five years after the Last Supper, laying down the doctrine he “had received of the Lord” in person, and already “delivered” to the Corinthians, and stating in clear, plain, literal sense: “This is My Body,” “This is My Blood,” without a hint of metaphor or symbol or figure. Either he assumes the Real Presence, or he has entered into a diabolical conspiracy with the other four inspired writers, and is deliberately deceiving the Corinthians, or—impossible supposition for a Christian—St. Paul and the four Evangelists are victims of their own diseased imaginations.

For (2) consider the awful *denunciation* launched against the unworthy receiver—“Guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord”—a Deicide, a God-murderer, a man with the guilt of God’s Blood on his soul! Anything more terrifying we cannot conceive. Yet what an exaggerated, unmeaning menace if Christ be

not really present! Is the man guilty of high treason against King Edward's person who strikes or insults the King's image or symbol on a penny piece? Is the man incurring damnation who takes holy water unworthily? The Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ. Would a man incur damnation by receiving it unworthily?

But if St. Paul is supposing the Real Presence this denunciation is most apt.

(3) "Let a man *prove* himself, and so eat." What is the proof, the preparation, in the Catholic Church? The Sacrament of Penance, as a rule, and fasting from midnight. Why? Because, like St. Paul, we believe the Eucharist to be the Body and Blood of Christ. Where the bread and wine are but a symbol, what is the preparation? What is the proof? There is no need to ask. An empty, lifeless commemoration needs no soul-searching preparation.

(4) Again, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself, not *discerning* the Body of the Lord." Are men to lose their souls for not discerning the Body of the Lord if it be not there? How can a man discern as really present what is *really absent*? No! St. Paul supposes the Real Presence, just as we do, as the clear, undeniable, undisputed doctrine of Jesus Christ, and hence the strength of his denunciation. For him, as for us, the *object ill-used*, in an unworthy Communion, is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and hence

the high treason against Christ; and by that ill-use the sinner incurs damnation by not discerning the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the real Victim, who is really and substantially present under the outward forms of bread and wine.

There is no possible escape from the relentless logic of this position. The carnal-minded Jews saw this, and "walked with Him no more." They broke with Christ. To accept the Incarnation and the Christian revelation, and, at the same time, deny the Real Presence, is to stultify human reason. It is almost unthinkable. When a Christian asks: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" the answer is evident. How did He give you life? How did He raise the dead? How did He become man at all? Who will say which is the greater mystery, the Incarnation or the Real Presence?

CHRISTIAN TRADITION—THE FATHERS.

To set forth the teaching and practice of the Church on the doctrine of the Eucharist, as we find it in the writings of the Fathers and the monuments of antiquity, would be an impossible task in a brief lecture. Nor is it necessary. The evidence down along the centuries is so diversified and so well known that no scholar can venture to deny the facts. The Protestant tries to explain it away just as he tries to eviscerate the clear words of Christ. He is logically

bound to make the attempt. But his contention involves the astounding implication that the whole of Christendom, for fifteen hundred years, erred grievously in an essential of faith. He must hold that men lived and loved and worshipped Christ, and spread His Gospel to the ends of the earth, and died, in many cases, for their belief in His Eucharist, being all the while under the huge delusion that He had left them His Body and Blood for their spiritual support, and that this was the central dogma of Christianity, the practical working out of the economy of the Incarnation, the abiding reality by which our Incarnate God is ever energizing in the midst of the sons of men. This is, surely, a soul-killing supposition for any real Christian to make. It must shake the foundations of faith, and paralyze hope, and dry up the fountains of charity. "O ye of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Where was Christ during all the centuries when His Church was teaching such grievous errors? What of His promise: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world?" Who were the depositaries of the true faith? Who handed on the torch of truth from generation to generation? Doctrine, practice, ritual, sacrament, sacrifice—all conspiring to form the one supreme act of Christian worship—were they all an empty dream, or, worse, a lying fable, a monstrous system of elaborated idolatry? And did Christ accept all this idolatrous homage without a protest?

THE SAINTS AND THE REAL PRESENCE.

Were the innumerable saints, all down the ages to Luther's day, victims of the same fond illusion? The saints are the masterpieces of God's hand in this world, moulded after their model, the Divine Exemplar. The rationalist, Harnack, tells us that "in all ages the Catholic Church has produced saints, and that she still produces them to-day." The saints believed with all their strength, and their union with God—which is the very essence of religion—was derived from the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass. Was their belief founded on a delusion? And, if so, was it *because* of this illusion, or in *spite* of it, that they became moral heroes, and stood out in bold relief above the dark background of worldliness, as men of genius in the spiritual order? No scientific historian, be he Christian or rationalist, will deny that spiritual and moral forces have been the prime factors in true human progress. Now, it was on spiritual and moral leverage the saints relied to move the world. And they were convinced that the forces they employed were supplied from the inexhaustible power-house of Christ's vitalizing energy in the Eucharist.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Cyprian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustin, St. Benedict, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Francis of Assissi, St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa of Jesus, St. Vincent de Paul, all left their mark on the world; all

were men and women of light and leading in their times. All drank in sanctity at the breasts of their mother, the Catholic Church. She fed them, and they believed she fed them, on the Body and Blood of their Redeemer. They are, confessedly, the finest products of our Christian civilization, the highest types that humanity can boast of, the clearest proof of the spiritual potentialities of our race. Their deep and beautiful religion, their sublime moral elevation, the sources of their mystic soarings they owed (so they believed) to the living, concrete, authoritative Catholic system which gave the tone and color and distinctive characteristics to their sanctity. And the essence of that Catholic system—by which alone saints are produced—was, and is, and ever shall be, the Holy Eucharist and the Mass. The saints, like all who believe in the Real Presence (in the sense of transubstantiation), bear testimony that it was in prayer during Mass and at Holy Communion, or before the Tabernacle, that they had their deepest spiritual experiences, their highest “mystic soarings.” Were they, one and all, victims of their own hallucinations or deceived by the “Father of Lies”? Did their spiritual instinct betray them? Was their union with their Incarnate God in the Eucharist nothing more than the vaporings of crazy mystics? Was their heroic devotedness founded on a lie? And did it remain for Luther and Calvin to find out the true religion of Christ?

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH (107 A. D.)

Among the first uninspired Christian documents we possess are the pastoral letters written by St. Ignatius when on his way to martyrdom in the Colosseum at Rome. No critic disputes their genuineness. The writer testifies to the apostolic doctrine of the Eucharist, for he was a disciple of the Apostle St. John. And the value of his testimony is enhanced by the fact that he is going to lay down his life for the Eucharistic faith that is in him. A few citations from this martyr-saint will suffice to show that he taught the same Eucharistic doctrine in the year of Our Lord 107 as Pius X. teaches in the year of Our Lord 1907.

(1) To the Smyrneans he writes:—"They (the Docetae who denied that Christ had a real body) abstain from the Eucharist and oblations because they consider not that the *Eucharist is the flesh of Our Saviour Jesus Christ*, the flesh which suffered for our sins, which the Father in His mercy raised again. They, therefore, who deny the gift of God perish in their disputing. Well had it been for them to make much of it, that they also might rise again. Let that be esteemed a secure Eucharist which is either under the Bishop or him to whom he may commit it." Ad. Smyrn., N.7.8.

There is no uncertainty or wavering in this teaching. The Smyrneans cannot fail to recognize the Lord's teaching as recorded in St. John (ch. vi.).

(2) To the Roman Christians he says: "I have no taste for corruptible food, nor for the pleasure of this life. I wish for God's bread, heavenly bread, bread of life, *which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*, who was afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham. And I wish for *God's draught, His blood*, which is love without corruption, and life for evermore." Ad. Rom., N.7.

This man, who is about to seal his faith with his blood, is surely speaking of realities. In clear, unequivocal language he deals with the most august mysteries.

(3) Similarly to the Ephesians:—"Obeying the bishop and the presbytery with an entire mind; breaking one bread which is the medicine of immortality; an antidote that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ." Ad. Ephes., N.20.

His hope of immortality is firmly grounded on his Saviour's promise: "He that eateth My flesh . . . hath life everlasting."

(4) For the Philadelphians he lays down disciplinary rules:—"Be careful, therefore, to us one Eucharist, for there is *but one flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ*; and one cup for the uniting of His blood; one altar; as also one bishop, together with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants; that so, whatever ye do, ye may do it according to God." Ad. Phil., N.4.

These are illuminating passages, and inspiring for

a Catholic. They have the genuine ring of Christ's famous words in them. He neither dilutes, nor minimizes, nor falters. He accepts the whole teaching of Christ in the most *literal* sense. He leaves no doubt as to his belief in what we now call transubstantiation.

The first great Father of the Church does not find metaphor or poetry or rhetoric or parable in Christ's promise and institution of the Eucharist. On the contrary, he shows that he is dealing with stubborn facts, written in plain prose, and so he employs the hard logic of systematic theology in his famous pastoral letters.

St. Justin Martyr (in his Apologies to the Roman Emperors Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius, in the middle of the second century) is equally insistent on the fact that we do not receive common bread and wine in the Eucharist, but "the very flesh and blood of the same Incarnate Jesus" who was made flesh for us. But there is no need to quote further. As we come down along the stream of Christian tradition the waters do not become muddy. The doctrine of the Real Presence is the central point of the whole Catholic system of worship of our Incarnate God.

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

I began this discourse by a word of preface on the fitness of the Blessed Eucharist for man's spiritual needs. Then, out of the New Testament, I reminded you of the Redeemer's promise and institution of the

Divine gift, and of its use among the first Christians, as related by St. Paul. There was no need of mere human words. The Word of God spoke for itself. Finally, I stated very briefly that the universal tradition of the Church in the East, as well as in the West, from St. Ignatius of Antioch to Pius X., proves without a shadow of doubt that the whole spiritual life of the Christian Church centred round the Real Presence in the Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Altar—the Sacrament being the very source of the Christian's life, his daily bread; the Sacrifice the supreme act of divine worship, since in it God Himself is both Priest and Victim.

It remains to say a word as to our own practical esteem and use of this precious heirloom of our King, this last and truly Godlike token of His bounty.

We believe with Divine Faith, and on Divine Authority, that Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is "*truly*" present in the Blessed Sacrament, under the appearance of bread and wine—*truly*, and not merely by way of sign or symbol, as Zwinglius taught.

We believe that He is "*really*" and objectively present—not merely subjectively, not merely by virtue of our faith or imagination in the act of receiving, as Calvin, and many others since, taught.

We believe that He is "*substantially*" present, and not merely by reason of His works or effects, but in His very substance, as He was God-Man on earth, and is now God-Man in heaven.

Further, we believe, as the logical outcome of God's words, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," that the substance of bread and wine ceases to be—the accidents miraculously remaining—and that that substance is changed or converted into the substance of Christ's Body and Blood. That is, we believe, as a dogma of our faith, that the presence of the real living Christ, and the absence of the substance of bread and wine, is effected by transubstantiation. This, which was bread, is now My Body by transubstantiation, or change of substance, wrought by the power of Him Who created out of nothing, and raised the dead to life.

If any believer in the Incarnation should ask: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" the answer is evident. Because this man is God. It is a mystery. It is a miracle of love. And who, that believes in the Incarnation, dare set limits to God's love?

Again, Jesus Christ says, by way of *threat*: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." He says, by way of *allurement* and promise: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day." And this He says to rich and poor, young and old, married and single, parents and children, priests and layman, saint and sinner. There is no exception of persons or states of life.

This is the Catholic belief in which you live, and

for which you are ready to die. This is your theory. What is your practice? How does this *threat*, how does this *promise*, affect your relations to Jesus Christ in the Banquet of His love, and in the Tabernacle, which is His audience chamber? The Church has ever taught that the Blessed Eucharist is the ordinary food of our souls. She has never ceased to encourage her children to frequent Communion as the natural interpretation of Christ's words and the natural response to Christ's lavish giving of Himself in His Sacramental life. Her children have been at times timid, at times cold, at other times, and in other places, zealous and responsive to the Redeemer's love. Her official teaching is on record. She has been faithful to His counsels. She has never wavered in her sacramental devotion. By her councils, and through her saints, she has kept before her children the yearning of the Heart of Jesus for union with the sons of men. She has ever made the Eucharist the crown and glory of her sacramental system, and lavished all the splendor of her ritual on the Sacrifice of the Mass as her supreme act of worship.

The *Council of Trent*, in the middle of the sixteenth century, sums up her position: "The Holy Synod would desire that *at every Mass* the faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Eucharist." (Sess. xxii., cap. vi.) The Synod realizes that it is "our daily bread,"

our source of spiritual strength against temptation, as well as our guarantee of life eternal: "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." So that, in the mind of the Church, the Sacrament is not *primarily* a reward of virtue, nor even a means of securing due honor and reverence to Our Lord. It is all that. But its primary purpose, according to the Council of Trent, is to serve as "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults, and preserved from deadly sins." (Sess. xiii., cap. ii.) And this is but the practice of the first Christians: "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread," to derive the much-needed strength for the daily Christian struggle.

St. Cyprian (A. D. 248) brings out clearly the nature of the Eucharist as a daily help. "And, therefore," he says, "we ask that our bread—that is, Christ—may be given to us daily, in order that we, who abide in Christ, may not depart from His sanctification and body." We feed on his *real* body as a means of interior personal union with Christ, and of external communion with His *mystic* body, the Catholic Church.

The advice of St. Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 370) is an answer to many imaginary objections to frequent Communion. "If it be 'daily bread,' why receive it but once a year? Receive each day that which profits you daily. . . . If one be not worthy to receive it daily, neither is one fit to receive it once a year."

Again, he says: "There are people who fancy that the duty of penance consists in their abstaining from Communion. This is to deal too harshly with themselves; it is exposing themselves to punishment, and refusing the remedy."

St. Augustine of Hippo (429 A.D.) tells us emphatically that the Eucharist is "our daily bread," and so we rightly say, "Give us this day our daily bread," that we may not be separated from God.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century, quotes St. Ambrose for his own view: "I ought always to be receiving, since I am always sinning."

POPE PIUS X.

These are the views of Popes and saints and doctors all through the centuries, and these are the sentiments that animate Pope Pius X. For, in the short space of two years, the present Supreme Pontiff has issued no less than six Papal documents insisting on the frequent and daily use of the Holy Eucharist as the specific heaven-sent panacea for the spiritual well-being of all classes of the faithful in our age. And to inflame our desire for the Holy Table, and revive the spirit of primitive fervor, he has set before us as an ideal the practice of the early Christians. In the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews, the Holy Father may say: "Having, therefore, so great a cloud of witnesses over our heads, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us engage in the

struggle," with the Body and Blood of God to sustain us. The conditions required for entering the banquet hall are always the same—(1) that you approach clad in the wedding garment of sanctifying grace, (2) that you have a right intention. Or, as St. Paul puts it: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread." Christ's Vicar has laid down the essential conditions for approaching the Sacred Table fruitfully—(1) the state of grace (secured by the Sacrament of Penance if necessary), (2) a right intention in receiving. This is authoritative and final. It is an act of the immediate jurisdiction of the Supreme Pastor, as Christ's vicegerent, over human souls. Not even priest or Bishop, much less a parent, is competent to impose other conditions.

Every argument, then, you can bring forward against frequent and daily Communion, every argument the enemy of souls can suggest, is really an argument in favor of it, and carries its own condemnation.

(a) You fear to receive frequently because you are violently tempted.

The Eucharist is "the antidote . . . whereby we are delivered from deadly sins." (Council of Trent.) How are you to resist if you receive not the Bread of the Strong? "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

(b) You are frail, and afraid of a relapse.

"I would as soon hear you say that you do not call

in the doctor because you are too sick." (Cure d'Ars.)
The Eucharist is the bread that makes pure, the support of the frail and tottering.

(c) You have sinned much in the past, and are unworthy.

Shall you be more worthy if you put it off for a month, for a year? The Eucharist is the returned Prodigal's banquet, the consolation of the repentant sinner. "There is no habit of sin, however deplorable or deep-rooted, which may not be diminished, and ultimately extinguished, by frequent Communion." (St. Alphonsus Liguori.)

(d) You are troubled by family cares and sorrows and bereavements.

Whither shall you fly for consolation if not to the Heart of Jesus? "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Thou art the bread of life and the wine of joy and gladness.

(e) You are living in the midst of worldliness and sin.

"The oftener you communicate the better, living, as you are, in the midst of coarseness and unchastity, shamelessness and irreligion." (Monseigneur de Segur.) Was not the Redeemer the friend of publicans and sinners?

(f) Children are giddy, and have many small faults and imperfections.

Yes; but they are good and loving, and in the state of grace. And Christ says: "Suffer the little ones to come to Me, and forbid them not." Our Lord does

not require of them more than they can give. He understands them better than we can. He knows that innocence is the most precious of treasures, and that Satan seeks to rob them of it early. Holy Communion alone can protect them, and keep them pure. The Holy See says: "Let them be impregnated with the grace of Our Lord before the passions have run riot in their hearts." In any case, the judgment as to fitness for the Sacraments lies, by Christ's ordinance, with "the dispensers of the mysteries of God," under the guidance of Christ's Vicar on earth.

(g) Finally, you are even now in sin.

St. Paul answers: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of this bread." And who will say that the conditions of probation, the terms of reconciliation, are not easy? No! the difficulties raised against frequent Communion are but the promptings of sloth or self-indulgence or passion, or the well-known ruses of the spirit of evil. Christ gives them no sanction, the Church gives them no sanction, the saints give them no sanction. Surely, then, for us the touching invitation of the Heart of Christ is irresistible: "Come to Me all you who labor, and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." The love of Christ constrains us. His tender condescension draws us to Him by its magic force. All our pleas against frequent Communion are vain. The Holy Eucharist is the last and greatest effort of God's love to satisfy all the yearnings of man's heart—the sovereign divine talisman

that converts every sorrow into joy. Man is tormented and tortured, in his nobler moods, by an insatiable hunger, an unquenchable thirst, for infinite truth and goodness. In the Eucharist he can satisfy that hunger, and slake that thirst, on the very flesh and blood of his God. What infinite condescension and contrivance of Love Divine! "My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God," says Royal David. What rapturous psalms of praise and thanksgiving would he not have sung could he have feasted at this banquet and slaked his thirst with the blood of the Lamb! Even Joseph and Simeon were not as highly privileged as we are. For us was reserved the promise, the divine guarantee: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day." Amen.





