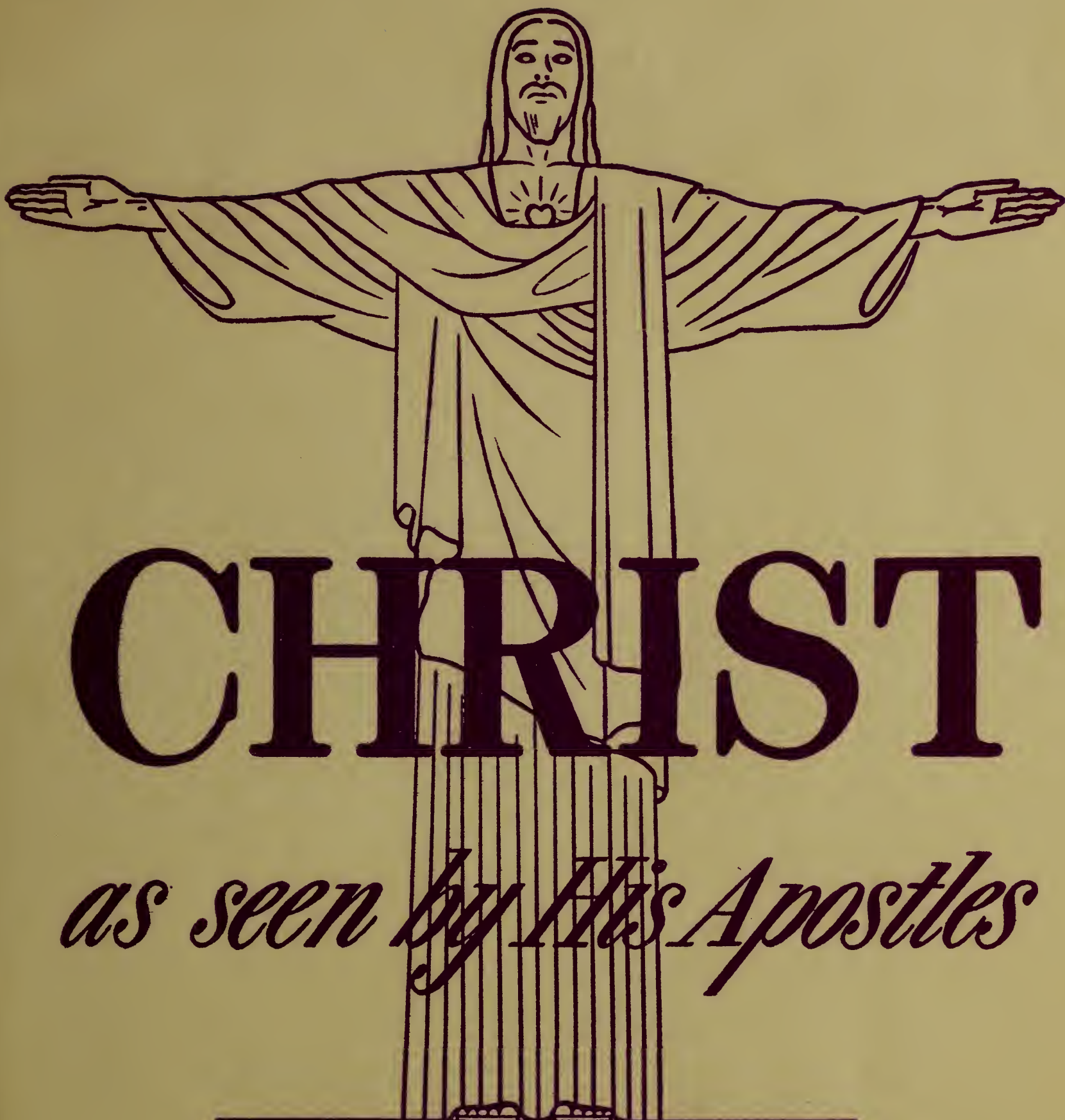


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Christ, as seen...

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CHRIST

as seen by His Apostles

Rev. Edward J.

O'BRIEN

CHRIST AS SEEN BY
HIS APOSTLES

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A series of four talks given on the HOUR OF FAITH from August 7, 1949 to August 28, 1949 by Rev. Edward J. O'Brien, Pastor of Little Flower Church, Glen Echo, Maryland. This program was produced by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the American Broadcasting Company.

BY
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THE TWELVE

Address Given on August 7, 1949

The primary aim of every Christian should be to love Christ more and more. Now we know that there is a principle of philosophy, confirmed by common sense, which states that you cannot love what you do not know. Hence, it follows that the more you know about anyone deserving of your love, the greater will be your love for that person. The sincere Christian, therefore, should be most anxious to know everything possible about his Leader, in order to come to love Christ with more intensity, and to serve Him with greater devotion.

In the quest of the individual for a better understanding of the character of Christ, there are many available sources of information. But the best, and all too often the most neglected source, is the study of the relationship between our Savior and His twelve Apostles. They were a group of men, the most intimate friends the Lord had upon earth. They formed a band which included every type of temperament. It is not unreasonable to say that these twelve

represented all humanity in the variety of their character. They lived for the greater part of three years with Christ. They walked with Him; they talked with Him. Many times they were trying to Him in their dullness of comprehension of the things He taught them. Many times they failed Him in a crisis. Now and then they manifested a loyalty and a devotion which was heroic. But whether they were devoted or childishly irresponsible in individual instances, when we study the reaction of Christ to their behavior, we are able to draw a picture of the Savior's character and personality which no other source can give us. From that picture; from the understanding, patience, personal magnetism and love which our Lord revealed in dealing with them, we should come to love Him in some faint way as He deserves to be loved. More than this, we should glean from the experience of the Apostles, in their relationship with Christ, a measure of confidence in His understanding and His love, which will enable us to

struggle on in His service, when that struggle may seem almost too difficult to continue.

It is well for us to realize that from the Scriptural narrative of the public life of Christ and His twelve Apostles, we have a clear-cut outline of His response to their oftentimes strange actions. It is doubly necessary to recall that His reactions then were the same as they would be today, because, being God as well as Man, He does not change with the centuries. Being understanding then, with the twelve, He is understanding now with us, and our only goal should be to try to serve Him even better than did those twelve men. We may not succeed, but at least we can try.

Before recalling some of the events which occurred in the lives of the Apostles in their relationship with Christ, let us look at these men, chosen by the Lord to be His first representatives upon earth. By name they were the following: Simon, destined to be the leader, known to history as Peter, the first Pope; John, the special friend of the Redeemer; James the Greater, and James the Less, Thomas, called the Doubter, which, as we shall see, is a rather unjust description of him; Philip, the

matter-of-fact; Andrew, the brother of Peter; Matthew, a collector of taxes before becoming a collector of souls; Nathaniel, also known as Bartholomew, who was inclined to regard all things with cynical eyes; Jude Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot, two cousins of the Savior; and finally, Judas, the traitor, who has gone down in history as the one man who officially sold God Himself, for a price which added no lustre to Judas' reputation as a bargainer and a lover of money.

Let me repeat, there is included in that group of men every type of character. If you seek devotion personified, you find it in John. If you ask for unbounded enthusiasm and zeal, sometimes almost too unrestrained, you find it in Peter. If you view the world with suspicion and must be shown before you believe, you need not go beyond Nathaniel or Thomas. If you are interested solely in a consideration of every-day facts, your patron is Philip. No matter what type of character you seek, you will find it among these twelve. And the more you study what we know about them, the more you marvel that our Lord chose these twelve with that end in view, in order that each one of us of

future generations might study them, choose the one most like unto ourselves, and realize that as Christ dealt with that Apostle so He will deal with me.

It is also interesting, in studying the twelve, to note that as each one possessed very individual characteristics, so, as a group, there were qualifications, or a lack of them, which were common to all. For example, you will observe that there was not a man of political influence, wealth, formal education or top-ranking social position among them. To some this may seem strange. But to the modern, thoughtful Christian, with the advantage of looking back across twenty centuries to the time when the Apostles lived, it is most logical that Christ should have so chosen His first spokesmen. Keeping the fact of their seeming inadequacy in mind, the existence and continued growth of Catholicism throughout these centuries stands as a perpetual and continuing miracle.

To realize the magnitude of their task and the marvel of their success as we know it today, consider the concrete facts for a moment: Following the treason of Judas and the selec-

tion of Matthias as his successor, we find twelve men with nothing going into a world with all; teaching a doctrine which would not flatter selfish instincts; asserting that their Leader, Christ, who had been put to death as a seeming criminal, was not merely not a criminal, but God Himself-made-Man. Moreover, they all were Jewish, and therefore hated by the gentile and pagan world of the time. Furthermore, other than Judas, they were Galileans, and hence despised by the rest of their fellow-Jews. That such a group of non-entities, in the world's opinion, could succeed in converting that world would today be branded as ridiculous, as it was when they appeared. But today, the reality of Christianity is an established fact. Had these men been political rulers; had they led mighty armies of soldiers; had they possessed unlimited wealth; had their human intelligence been so brilliant that all men bowed before it; there might have been a human explanation for the acceptance of the teaching of Christ. Our Lord foresaw that, and in order that no such plausible, worldly explanation for the spread of Christianity might ever be considered seriously, He chose His

representatives from among the lowly of the earth (as the world measures social position), and He challenged that world to explain away the fact that Christianity has spread other than because it is the religion of God Himself.

My dear friends: During the remaining Sundays of August we shall strive to arrive at a clearer understanding of the personality of Christ by considering the nature of His responses to the actions of His chosen followers. But, before doing this, it has seemed necessary to attempt to describe for you, very briefly, the human material, namely the Apostles, upon which Christ, the Divine Sculptor, left His imprint. In their natural abilities so human; in their accomplish-

ments so superhuman; the Apostles constitute a group which should be of real interest to you, and of immeasurable value and consolation in the practice of your religion. After all, they were not such paragons of virtue that we need feel that we cannot attempt to imitate them. They were very human, mortal beings; yet Christ told them: "I no longer call you servants, but friends." Despite their failings, at time, they were His friends. Despite ours, we also can be His friends.

Please pray that I may picture the Apostles for you in some small measure as they were and are. Let me repeat, as they *are*, for the Twelve Apostles should never cease to live for the true Christian of any century.

THE MAGNETISM OF CHRIST

Address Given on August 14, 1949

One of the most valuable assets any leader can possess is a magnetic personality; that is, that quality which enables one to inspire his followers with such loyalty to himself, and zeal for his cause that they will spend themselves untiringly in his service. It is that gift which attracts others so much that even those who came to oppose remain to serve.

Christ, our Savior, possessed this gift of personal magnetism in an immeasurable degree. Ever since His life upon earth, artists and sculptors have been striving to put down upon canvas, or carve out of marble, their impressions of Him. But a far better picture of Christ than any artist has painted is to be found by studying His words and actions as revealed in the New Testament. And one of the first impressions you receive from such a study is the influence He exerted upon all who met Him. Without doubt, the ability of Christ to fire the imaginations of men, and to move their wills, was one of the primary reasons for His success in changing the heart of the world.

This magnetism of Christ is manifest from the very beginning of His public ministry.

Consider, for example, the account we have of His selection of His first Apostles. We are told that one day John the Baptist was teaching along the banks of the Jordan river, when he suddenly pointed to one in the group and made the dramatic announcement: "Behold the Lamb of God!" All eyes, we may well imagine, turned to gaze upon the one who was being pointed out as the long expected Messiah. In the crowd surrounding John were two men, Andrew and Philip by name, who joined with the others in gazing at Christ. But they did more. Christ so impressed them, even at first glance, that they went to His side, spent the remainder of the day with Him, at His invitation, and from that time on, were His apostles. To see Him was enough to cause them to leave all things and spend their lives in His service. However, even more striking was their report to two other future apostles, following their visit with Christ.

Philip returned to his friend

Nathaniel, and informed him that he had seen the promised Redeemer. When Nathaniel questioned this, Philip outlined briefly his reasons for his belief in Christ, but summed everything up best in his request to Nathaniel: "Come and see!" The same procedure was followed by Andrew in suggesting to his brother Simon, later known as Peter, that he come and see the Messiah. No greater compliment was ever paid to the personality of Christ than the invitation extended to Simon and Nathaniel by the first two apostles: "Come and see!" They knew that to see Christ was enough.

However, the best possible illustrations of the magnetic power of our Lord over men are to be found in the actions of three of His apostles when the Saviour was with them, as compared with what the same three did when He was *not* beside them. The first illustration is the case of Thomas.

For centuries, the name "Thomas" has been synonymous with "doubt." This, of course, has resulted from the fact that Thomas was not present in the upper room in Jerusalem, when Christ first appeared following His resurrection. Thomas' up-

on his return, after the Lord had left, asserted that he would not believe in the resurrection until he had put his fingers into the wounds in the Savior's hands, feet and side. Mankind, ever willing to recall men's failings, remembers that assertion, but forgets that there was another occasion when Thomas was the hero of the twelve. Sometime before the Redeemer's actual passion and death He told the apostles that He was going to visit His friend, Lazarus, who was then gravely ill. Everyone knew that the authorities of Judea, where Lazarus lived, were waiting for any opportunity to capture our Lord, and put Him to death. The twelve immediately reminded Christ of this fact. "If there is one place you should avoid it is Judea," was the tenor of their prudent warning. But Christ persisted in His determination to visit His friend. The apostles looked helplessly and hopelessly at one another. Then, convinced that the Redeemer's resolve to risk death itself for His friend could not be swayed, one of them put into words the sentiments of all when he said: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him!" The one who made that statement was Thomas, known to history as

“The Doubter.” You will note that Christ was there when Thomas urged martyrdom for them all, if their Leader was to suffer death. His Master’s magnetic force made Thomas the hero that he was.

The second instance which points out the influence of the presence of Christ upon His followers was that of Peter, destined to be the first pope.

One day the twelve were gathered about the Lord when He warned them that He was going to permit Himself to be put to death for the redemption of the world, and that they would be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. At this statement Peter heartily assured Christ that though all others might deny Him, he, Peter, never would. In part he abided by this declaration for, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to take the Savior captive, it was Peter who drew his sword to protect his Leader. Once again, you will note that Christ was present when Peter acquitted himself so nobly in word and deed. But, a few hours later, when Christ was in a distant courtroom, Peter was three times denying that he even knew this Man.

Lastly, I would remind you of Judas. Here we have a man best characterized as a lover of wealth. Having been the treasurer of the Apostles’ meager funds during his apostolate, he determined, one sad day, to add to that fund by selling Christ Himself. Clothed in the garb of secrecy, he went to the enemy and asked what they would give him to betray his Master. With Christ far away the thirty pieces of silver seemed a worth-while offer, which offer Judas accepted. But then came the carrying out of the betrayal, and what a different story! When Judas led the band of soldiers to Christ, so great was the personal magnetism of the Lord, that not merely did the soldiers fall flat to the ground in awe of their Divine Prisoner, but Judas, the lover of wealth, returned to his fellow bargainers, and, in tribute to that magnetism, threw the miserable coins at their feet. With Christ absent Judas could sell Him; when confronted by that wondrous personality, Judas cast away even the money, his false god, and acknowledged true Divinity. It is well to remember that Judas’ final sin was not in selling our Lord—it was in despairing that even Christ would forgive him that offense.

You will notice the same pattern in each of the three instances just mentioned. Thomas, Peter and Judas, left to their own devices, could and did fall into sin. But these same men behaved in an entirely different fashion when Christ was near. This fact must have been one of the reasons which impelled our Lord to remain with us in the Blessed Sacrament. He saw these twelve men, enjoying three years of constant association with Him, able to do anything when He was at their side, but becoming the weakest of men when He was no longer there. He looked down through the years to come, and He saw other Christians; He saw us. And He realized that if the apostles, despite His personal training, could be so helpless without Him, what would we become? Loving us, and being God as well as Man, He did what no one else could have done: He remained Himself under the appearances of bread and wine. As a result, until the end of time, Christ would be no farther away from us than the nearest tabernacle. Hence, each

one of us can be a true Christian if only we make the effort. Christ's magnetism is evidence today in the heroic lives of so many of His followers who patiently suffer the ravages of illness and the sorrows of life. Without Him they might despair. But when discouragement assails them they kneel before an altar, and share their burdens with their Divine Friend in the tabernacle, Who has first carried a far heavier cross than any human being will ever be required to shoulder. Perhaps you have already learned this truth, and are one of that heroic band. If you have not, just try it! Our Lord is as helpful now, in the Blessed Sacrament, as He was in dealing with His apostles. Without Him they were helpless. With Him they were supermen. The same is true with us. In the words of Philip and Andrew, Christ says to you today: "Come and see!" Like those two apostles, and millions of others since their time, you will never be sorry if you accept that gracious invitation of the magnetic Christ.

THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST

Address Given on August 21, 1949

One of the greatest needs of the human race, in every age, is understanding among men; that is, the ability to see the other person's point of view.

To possess this virtue of understanding one must be patient. And, in this matter of patience, Christ has given us a most beautiful example.

First of all, He was patient beyond belief with His twelve chosen followers. Mention has already been made, in this series of talks, about the denial of Peter; the treason of Judas and the doubting of Thomas. It suffices today merely to remind you that after each one of those offenses, there was no complaining on the part of Christ. There was only patient understanding; a last minute attempt to save Judas by calling him "friend"; a single glance at Peter, which so moved the latter that he wept bitterly at having denied friendship with so patient a Leader; and, lastly, the gentle reminder to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." Al-

though our Savior had every reason to upbraid these three apostles, no trace of impatience is to be found in His dealings with them.

What was true in those three instances is evidenced on many other occasions when impatience might well have been expected.

For example, there was the failure of the twelve really to grasp His teaching about the necessity for Him to die for the redemption of the world.

Throughout the three years of His public ministry our Lord kept reminding His apostles that He had come upon earth to open the gates of heaven once again to the human race, by permitting Himself to be put to death. He stressed that this was the price to be paid for the insult to God's dignity, occasioned by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Day after day he repeated that His death was necessary for our redemption. Yet every time the subject was mentioned, especially when the actual passion and death of Christ became a reality, the apostles failed to recognize the truth which Christ

had been foretelling. In fear and trembling they fled from His side when that dread Good Friday came. However, three days later, when the seeming triumph of death had been disproved, and Christ once again appeared to them, not a single word of reproof for their cowardice in the crisis is recorded as having fallen from His lips. If ever Christ was justified in being impatient with His apostles that was the occasion. But the Lord was above and beyond such conduct.

If His chosen friends were slow to understand the doctrine of the redemption, they were equally slow in their reaction to the teaching of Christ about His resurrection from the dead.

As we look back upon the story of His life, we find that every time He warned them about His coming passion and death, He also rekindled their hopes by assuring them that He would conquer death by raising Himself from the tomb. In fact, He made the resurrection the final test of all His claims to Divinity. But we all remember what happened. Following the Savior's death and burial, the apostles, despite all their previous instruction on the matter, retired in complete confusion to the upper room in Jerusalem, believing

that their world had crashed about them. They lost confidence in their Lord Who had foretold that all these events would occur.

But you will recall that on Easter Sunday morning, when Christ appeared to them, He uttered no word of blame for their lack of faith. No mention was made by Him of their failure to trust in His promise. The Savior Who had been patient before continued to be patient. And that very patience only increased the apostles' mortification at having failed to believe in His word.

But the experience of the apostles as regards the patience of Christ was not limited to His dealings with them. Throughout His public life the twelve had reason to marvel at the understanding of Christ as they saw it manifested toward His less intimate friends, and even His enemies.

They observed the miracles He performed upon the sick and even the dead. They saw others who witnessed these wonders strive to explain them away by the most illogical arguments. But never did they see the patience of their Lord desert Him.

Many illustrations of this attempt to deride His miracles might be mentioned, but one will

suffice. You remember the account recorded by St. John of the giving of sight to the man born blind? You recall how our Lord had just declared Himself to be the Light of the World. And as He walked along He saw this blind man. In His desire to drive home His point the Savior gave the gift of sight and the vision of light to the man born blind. Truly the Redeemer was the Light of the World to that man! The astounded, rejoicing man arose, praising and glorifying his Benefactor, and, going into the nearby community he proclaimed the miracle which had been worked upon him. The authorities attempted to silence him. Failing in that, they began to question his ever having been blind at all. Apparently everyone was aware of the man's former condition, and merely laughed at such a stupid attempt at an explanation. Exasperated, our Lord's enemies then tried to persuade the parents of the man to assert that he had not been blind. Despite their fear of reprisals, they refused. They would only say that all they knew was that their son, hitherto blind, was now able to see. The apostles witnessed all these efforts to disprove their Leader's ability to work miracles, and

they noted also how He ignored such tawdry tactics. His only comment, in the face of these and other similar attempts to discredit Him, was to urge the one benefitting by His power to say nothing further about it. Patience! It was one of our Lord's most frequently exercised virtues!

Just as He was patient during His everyday earthly life, so was He in His passion and at death. Whether facing sneering, hypocritical judges, whose only authority came from Him, or hearing the baseless charges preferred against Him by His enemies, never did He cease to look with forbearance upon those who acted so, until the bystanders realized that the true judge was on the witness stand rather than upon the bench. Soldiers might scoff at Him and gamble for His cloak. Men might scourge Him, and make a crown out of piercing thorns to press into His brain. But always the calm Christ maintained His patience as if these actions simply didn't matter. He understood to what lengths hatred could cause men to go, but perhaps some one or more than one might pause and meditate upon His patience, and become His follower, even at the last moment. We know that He

was so rewarded, for Dismas, one of the thieves crucified beside Him, was so impressed at hearing the Savior's plea for the forgiveness of His murderers, that he, who had been impatient for wealth, found his real treasure as he went into eternity with His patient Lord.

The patience of Christ was seemingly unbounded. It is because of this fact that so many millions of sinners have dared to return to His side through the ages. History records military and political leaders who have ignored and even flaunted every rule of moral law and decency, until fellow human beings wondered why God let such men live. Time went on, and many of these men came to their senses, or were superseded by more humane leaders, but only after they had been given chance after chance by a patient God. Men wondered, until they recalled that when God made man, He made him free, free to love his Creator and Friend or to reject Him. This awesome gift of free choice God Himself will always respect. Christ tried, by His own example, to lead men to use that free will properly, and as He acted during the years of His public ministry, so He has

acted in all the years since then.

But what does this patience of Christ, as experienced and witnessed by the apostles mean to us today? It means simply this: We of the twentieth century should reach a two-fold personal conclusion from our reflection upon the patience of the Redeemer. Firstly, to be tolerant of our neighbor; and secondly, to be trustful of our God! To realize that Christ, though buffeted on every side, captured the hearts of men, even of His enemies, by being understanding! Then, to appreciate that if we have fallen into sin, no matter how grave, Christ being patient is forgiving, and only waits for a word from us to make all things right again. Because man has a free will he sins by the abuse of it, and must at least begin by the help of God's grace to lift himself up by his own personal sorrow for his offense. And if you ever experience the need for such sorrow, like the thief upon the cross, you will find that the Savior will extend His forgiveness to you almost before you begin to ask it of Him. For the patient Christ is impatient for one thing alone, the soul of man, and especially for yours. If, perchance, here and now we stand in need of pardon, our Redeemer

is most understanding, and He us. We, in turn, should be impa-
is waiting, most patiently for tient to hurry back to Him.

CHRIST THE TEACHER

Address Given on August 28, 1949

It is generally admitted that Christ was the most effective teacher Who ever lived. Certainly, if the number of His followers through the centuries is any criterion, no one can deny the truth of that assertion.

The Apostles, in the three years spent with our Lord, had the opportunity of witnessing daily His teaching methods. In that time they came to realize the pattern which He followed in enabling men to grasp the truths He insisted upon as necessary for salvation.

It is true that Christ did not always explain His doctrine in minute detail. He did indeed demand faith in the dogmas He proposed to His disciples the nature of which He did not always see fit to make entirely clear to His listeners. However, it is untrue to assert that He required what is frequently called "blind" faith from those about Him. He sometimes asked for faith, but it was never blind.

In considering the mission of our Lord, we must remember that He came down upon earth to die for the redemption of mankind; that is, to open heaven

once again to the human race. But He came also to point out certain things which were to be done by us to earn the heaven opened to us by His death.

Christ knew that many of the things He would insist upon would be entirely new, things hitherto undreamed of by the minds of men. Over and above that, in the Divine plan, the inner meaning of some of the things He was to reveal was not to be made clear to man. In other words, there were to be some mysteries in religion; truths the nature of which man would not fully understand.

This submission of the human intellect and will was to be part of the price man was to pay to earn heaven. To put it briefly, man was to be asked to admit, in humility, that his mind was not equal to the Mind of God, and man's will was to submit freely to the fact that God wanted him to make that admission.

However, Christ, in stressing the need for such submission of man's mind and will did not ask His hearers to do it without a reason. It was to be a rational service. Man was to be asked

only to take God's word for the truth of these things; to accept them only when he was convinced that the One requiring belief is a mystery was worthy of belief.

This brief background is necessary to understand better why Christ followed the method that He did in revealing His various doctrines.

In the actual process of teaching, the Redeemer's usual method of revelation and instruction may be summed up as follows: It was our Lord's way to make reference to a doctrine of His in a rather off-hand way—to present it casually to His audience. Frequently His statement would be immediately questioned by some one in the group about Him, then Christ would explain it more fully, or repeat His previous assertion, to make it clear that it was to be understood in the sense in which He had first expressed it. If the matter was to remain a mystery, to be accepted on His word, once the fact of its existence had been revealed, our Savior often performed a physical miracle to show that He was God, as He claimed to be, and therefore deserving of belief. Then, when the visible miracle had been performed; when the hearers could

perceive by their senses that His word was worthy of acceptance, He would point out the reasonableness of taking His word for the necessity of belief in some truth the reality of which could not be perceived by the senses.

Christ never performed a miracle to show off. Always His main purpose was to cause men to realize that He was deserving of their faith.

We must never forget that when our Savior began His public ministry of three years, He had already lived thirty years at Nazareth, apparently just the son of a local carpenter, by the name of Joseph. By those who knew him, He was admittedly a remarkably good young man, but so far there had been little that was unusual about Him. Christ knew that He had three years to reveal His doctrine to the world in such a way that it would never be forgotten or ignored. But first He had to attract the attention of the world to Himself. Being God as well as Man, He had full power over physical nature. Knowing that man arrives at a large part of his knowledge through his senses, especially these of sight and hearing, our Lord saw the necessity of reaching the human intellect by means of astounding

actions, perceptible to the senses. Hence, He began to attract that necessary human attention by working miracles. He healed the sick; gave sight to the blind; even life to the dead. After human attention was thus attracted, the Redeemer asserted that He was God come down upon earth, and, in proof of that claim, asked men to note that the miracles He worked, were unlike the miracles performed by others before Him. Where others had called upon God to work wonders through them, Christ called upon no one. He stood beside a dead man, and Said: "I say to you arise!" And as the bystanders saw the dead man obey that command, the reasonable among them accepted His claim to Divinity, because only God could do the things Christ did, in the way He did them.

To point out one illustration among many that might be chosen, when our Lord claimed the power to forgive sin, He employed His usual method of teaching.

We are told that one day He was walking along, followed by the usual large audience, when a paralytic, seated by the roadside, cried out for help. Christ turned to the man, and told him that his sins were forgiven him.

Sin, and the soul, being invisible, neither the onlookers nor the paralytic could see the effect of that statement, and hence might have doubted its truth. Some immediately questioned our Lord's power to forgive sin. Then Christ, following His customary procedure, worked a miracle in the physical order, the reality of which could be seen by all. Turning, our Lord said: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' or to say 'Arise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins . . . I say to thee arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house." (Mark 2, 9-12) And the marveling crowd witnessed the hitherto paralyzed man obey the command of Christ. The Savior worked a physical miracle, the reality of which could be seen by all, to prove that He could work miracles upon the body; then He asked His hearer to take His word for it that He could work the same wonders upon the souls of men; wonders the reality of which men could not observe by their senses, but must admit if they were men of good will and common sense. In no way, then, can this acceptance of certain mysteries of religion revealed by

Christ, be called a "blind" acceptance.

Our Lord first proved, by word and deed, that He was worthy of belief. Had He failed to do so, He would not be followed by so many millions today, for His enemies have been trying, unsuccessfully, to discredit Him for twenty centuries.

Another feature which characterized Christ's method of teaching was its simplicity. Granting that there were certain things He asked men to accept as true on His word, there were many others which He revealed, which could be comprehended completely. And in making known these truths, Christ did it so simply and so clearly.

For example, the illustrations He used were everyday objects about Him, familiar to all. Thus, the mustard seed, growing into the mighty tree, symbolized the future growth of His religion. The beauty of the lilies of the field, and God's interest in the birds of the air, pointed out God's even greater interest in man. The countless sands on the seashore betokened the number of times God was willing to forgive the sorrowful sinner.

And how easy to grasp were the parables Christ told! Those short stories which made heav-

enly things be seen in the light of the earthly, and which made God, literally, walk with man. Thus the parable of the Prodigal Son, showed the tenderness of God toward repentant sinners, and made Divine forgiveness so understandable, and so consoling.

Above all else, Christ taught by His own example. Truly could He say: "Learn from Me," (Mt. 2, 29) and in every sense could He urge "If you will not believe My words, believe My works." He is the one Teacher Who exceeded by His actions the glory of His words. If he related one parable of the Prodigal Son, He forgave a dozen sinners in real life. If He told the story of the Good Shepherd once, He sought out straying humans time after time. Always the wonder of His works went far beyond the wonder of His words.

My dear friends: During this month we have attempted to see our Lord through the eyes of the Apostles. We have tried to point out how loving, patient, and compelling is His personality. We have noted that the Apostles sometimes failed Him, but these failures have not dimmed the glory that is the Savior's, nor diminished the love of men for Him. Today, as you

look about you, you may observe followers of His, why do not always live up to the standards He has set, or to the doctrine He has left us. If there is one concluding lesson that we should draw from these considerations, it is this: We should never blame the teaching of Christ, the Teacher, for the failings sometimes found in the lives of His followers. As someone has pointed out, when Christians do not live up to their obligations, we may fail to distinguish gilded

dust from dusty gold. The doctrine of our Savior is the pure gold of truth, and while the dust of human frailty may sometimes dull its sheen, Christ the Teacher was too loving ever to leave us a message which would serve merely to gold-plate, with seeming virtue, the dust of human error. In a word, we must always remember that Christ the Teacher is Christ our God, and that what He has told us is true, no matter *what* mankind may do.

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