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THE REASONABLENESS

OF

THE PRACTICES

OF

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

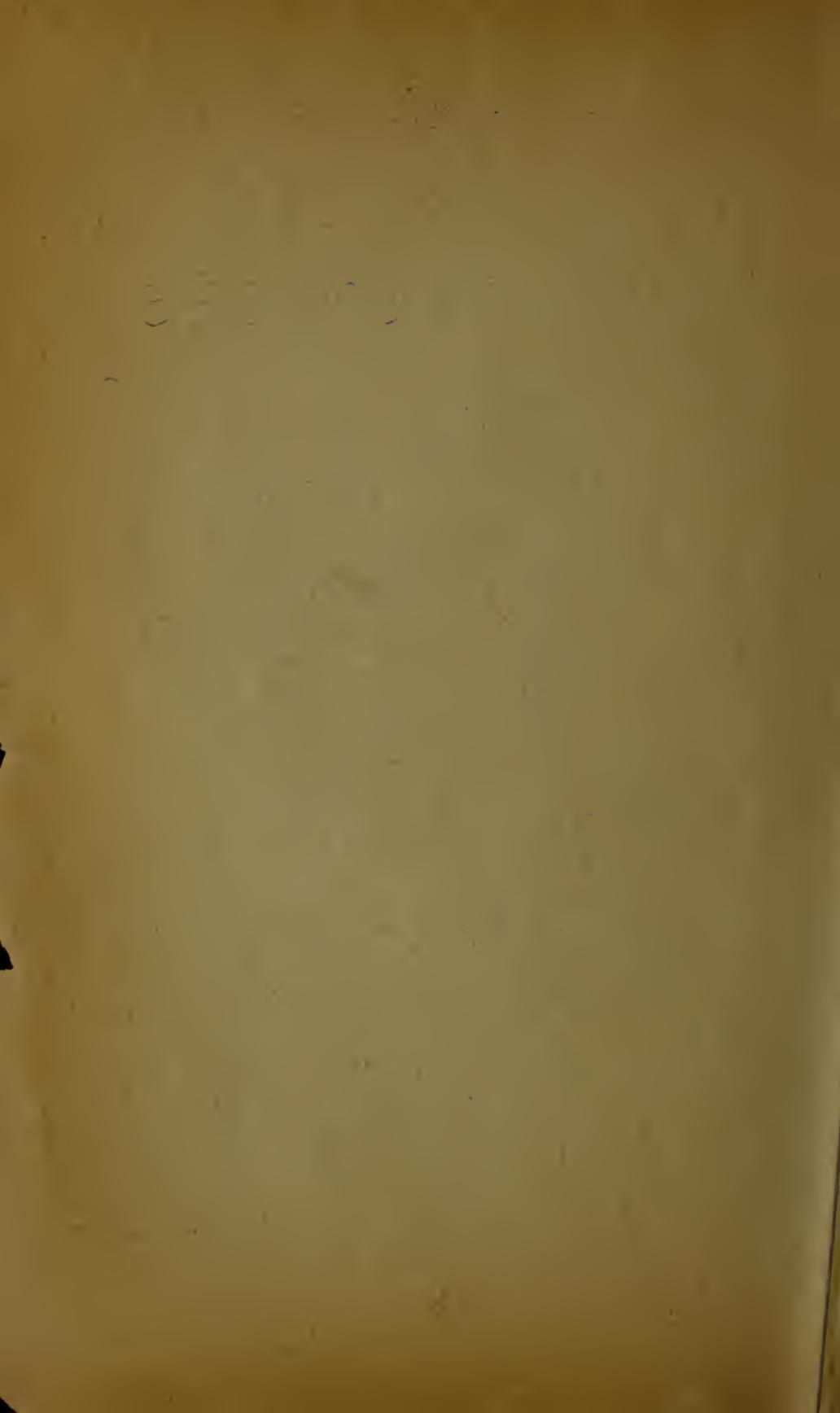
BY REV. J. J. BURKE

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See

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PREFACE.

By the *Practices* of the Catholic Church we mean those devotions and usages characteristic of her. Hence in these pages we do not treat of matters common to all Christians; but we endeavor to give a brief and clear statement of those religious observances that are especially Catholic.

This little work is intended as a companion and sequence to "The Reasonableness of the Ceremonies of the Catholic Church," published some time ago. The principal object in preparing them has been to explain (for the benefit of those unable to have more complete works) some matters much misunderstood.

It is the sincere desire that from these brief explanations some may gain such benefits as will assist them on the journey to their Eternal Home.

Chebanse, Ill., Feb. 25, 1892.

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The Reasonableness of the Practices of the Catholic Church.

I. VESPERS AND BENEDICTION.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day” (Exodus xx. 8).

THIS commandment teaches us that God wills the whole Sunday to be spent in His honor. We should sanctify it by good works, and by assisting at divine service. On that day servile works and improper amusements are forbidden. A salutary rest and moderate recreation are allowed, but never at the expense of duties of obligation. After hearing Mass on Sunday morning, which is obligatory on all Catholics, there is no better way of sanctifying the remainder of the day than by attending Vespers and Benediction.

The Vesper service is a small portion of the divine office, which priests must recite daily, for God's honor and glory. It consists of five of the psalms of David (Dixit Dominus, ps. 109; Confitebor tibi, ps. 110; Beatus vir, ps. 111; Laudate pueri, ps. 112; In exitu Israel, ps. 113, or Laudate Dominum, ps. 116), a hymn, the Magnificat, or

canticle of the Virgin Mary, from the first chapter of St. Luke, and some prayers. Is it not reasonable thus to praise God in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles?

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament usually follows Vespers. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament. The reasonableness of this teaching will be seen in the following article.

Since Jesus Christ is present, He ought to be adored by the faithful. Faithful adorers frequently visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament and worship Him in "spirit and in truth." Hence, the Blessed Sacrament is kept in the Tabernacle on our altars to soothe our cares, answer our prayers, and be ready at any time to be administered to the sick and dying.

Besides our private devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Church has appointed solemn rites to show publicly our faith and devotion toward the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. These rites are processions on Corpus Christi, the Forty Hours devotion, and, especially, the rite called Benediction.

When it is time for Benediction many candles are lighted on the altar. This is done to show our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. If He were not present, this display would be unreasonable, unnecessary, and meaningless. But the candles we light, the incense we burn, the flowers and other ornaments we use to decorate the altar, and all that we do for Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cannot be too much.

Everything being prepared, the priest takes the Blessed Sacrament out of the Tabernacle, and,

placing It in the ostensorium, exposes It on an elevated throne, while the choir sings in honor of the Blessed Sacrament the hymn "O Salutaris Hostia," "O Saving Host." The priest incenses Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, as, according to the Apocalypse, angels do in heaven. Another hymn or a litany follows; after which is sung the "Tantum Ergo," "Down in adoration falling," followed by a prayer by the priest. Then in the midst of a solemn silence (except that a small bell is tinkled) the priest takes the monstrance, or ostensorium, containing the Blessed Sacrament, and, turning toward the people, makes with it the sign of the cross over them, thus blessing the faithful with the Most Holy One.

This is certainly a most touching and impressive rite even to those who do not believe in it. Cardinal Newman calls it one of the most beautiful, natural, and soothing practices of the Church. No one will deny that this practice, or rite of the Church, is reasonable, if Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament. That He is really present is our belief. This being our belief, is it not reasonable to light candles as a sign of spiritual joy, and thus to show our faith in Him Who is the light of the world? He gave us all that we have. He gave us the beautiful world we dwell upon with its variety of scenery—with its snow-capped mountains, its green-carpeted hills, and its blooming valleys. He has no need of our gifts; for the earth is His "and the fulness thereof." Yet as He was pleased to receive the gifts of the Magi and the precious ointment of Mary, so, too, is He pleased

to receive our offerings. And is anything too good, too beautiful, too precious, for Him? Can the altar on which He dwells be too richly adorned? Are the pure candles we light, the sweet incense we burn, the choice flowers and costly ornaments with which we decorate the altar, too much to use in honor of Our Lord and Our God? Yes, the Catholic practice or rite of Benediction is dictated by right reason. Everything connected with Benediction is reasonable, beautiful, and suggestive of the *noblest sentiments of the heart of man*.

II. DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

“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” (St. Matt. xxvi. 26).

PERHAPS no mystery of revelation has been so universally attacked as the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

By the Real Presence is meant that Jesus Christ is really and truly, body and blood, soul and divinity, present in the Blessed Sacrament, under the form and appearance of bread and wine.

This teaching of the Church is in perfect agreement with Scripture, tradition, and reason.

If the reader will take up his Bible and read carefully the 6th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John; the 26th chapter, 26th, 27th, and 28th verses of St. Matthew; the 14th chapter, 22d verse of St. Mark; the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Cor-

inthians, 10th chapter, 16th verse, as well as other portions of the New Testament, he will certainly see that the Catholic teaching and practice concerning the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament are founded on Scripture. In this 6th chapter of St. John, we learn that before instituting the Blessed Sacrament Our Saviour wished to announce or promise it to His disciples in order to prepare them for it. He first gave them a figure of the Blessed Sacrament in the multiplication of the five loaves of bread by which He fed five thousand persons. After this miracle He told them that He would give them bread superior to that which they had eaten, and that this bread was His own flesh and blood. "The bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." It is almost impossible to understand these words of Our Lord in any other than a literal sense. He was so understood by those who heard Him. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they said, and many withdrew from Him. It is but reasonable to believe that if He did not wish to be understood in a literal sense He would have told his hearers so, rather than have them leave Him.

This promise of a doctrine so difficult to understand was fulfilled at the Last Supper.

Then 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 for many for the remission of sins."

“Do this for a commemoration of Me.”

These are substantially the words of Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and of the apostle Paul.

In the 10th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: “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?”

Any one of these texts abundantly proves the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence, and shows the reasonableness of the Catholic practice regarding the Blessed Sacrament. Reflect upon them. Reflect especially upon the words of Christ, “This is My body.” Think what an insult it is to the divinity and veracity of Christ to doubt His word, because you cannot understand how what appears to be bread is in reality His own body and blood.

If you remember that Jesus Christ is God, that He had the power to make this change, that He could confer this power on others, as the apostles and their successors, that He did so when He said: “Do this in commemoration of Me,” and that this change at the present time as at the time of the apostles is made by His Almighty power, you will have no difficulty in believing it.

The belief and practice of the Catholic Church of to-day regarding the Blessed Sacrament is the same as it was in every age since the time of Christ. The history of every century tells us this. The fathers, doctors, and Church writers of every age say the same. If it were not so, some one ought to be able to find the time when the doctrine was invented, and the person who invented it. But,

since no one has been able to find the inventor of this doctrine and practice, the time or place of the invention, we rightly conclude that they came down to us from the time of Christ, and had Christ for an author. (Berengarius, in the eleventh century, was the first who denied this doctrine.) If, then, Christ is the author, is not the Catholic practice reasonable?

But I don't understand the Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Sacrament, some one may say; therefore it is contrary to reason. Dear reader, did the consummate puerility, silliness, foolishness of such an objection ever present itself to you? Do you understand the Blessed Trinity? And is it contrary to reason? No. Although above reason, it is not against it. Do you understand how Jesus Christ is both God and man? Do you understand any mystery? No. If you did it would no longer be a mystery. For a mystery is something above human intelligence. It is something incomprehensible to us, for it pertains to the divine intelligence. And as well might you attempt to pour the mighty ocean into a small hole on the shore, as attempt to hold with your limited capacity the illimitable ocean of divinity. The proper office of reason is to examine the evidences of revelation, and see if God has spoken. But it constitutes no part of its office to dispute the word of God. That God has spoken is evident from the fulfilment of many prophecies and the authority of many miracles. That these prophecies have been fulfilled, and these miracles performed, is as certain as is any historical fact. Reason teaches us this. It teaches

us, too, that no one but God (or by the power of God) can prophesy; no one but God can derogate from the order of nature, by the performance of a miracle. Reason teaches us, then, that God has spoken. When we know God speaks, genuine reason will dictate that we humbly believe His holy word. Thus will true reason ever act. And when God says, "This is My body," it will not hesitate to believe.

We all believe that at the baptism of Our Saviour by St. John Baptist, the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove. Now, is it not as reasonable for Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, to appear in the form of bread as it was for the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, to appear in the form of a dove? We must therefore admit that the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is reasonable; that it has been believed by the Christian Church of every age from the time of Christ until the present time; and that it is taught by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and by St. Paul in clear and unmistakable terms.

Now, dear reader, since Jesus Christ is really present, is not the Catholic practice regarding the Blessed Sacrament reasonable? Should we not honor Our Lord and Our God? Should we not adore Him as really present in the Blessed Sacrament? Should we not frequently receive Him with pure and contrite hearts? Should we not, when we enter the church, genuflect, bend the knee in His honor? Should we not show Him every mark of respect and devotion? Can we do too much in

His honor? Let us, then, adore Our Lord and Our God, for we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Let us return love for love to the great King of suffering Who was born for love of us, Who died for love of us, and Who, for love of us, remains ever with us in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us ask that our faith and love may persevere to the end; that loving and adoring Him here in the Blessed Sacrament of His love, *we may be united with Him forever hereafter.*

III. HOLY COMMUNION.

“He that eateth this bread shall live forever” (St. John vi. 59).

HOLY Communion is receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The clergy when saying Mass, except on Good Friday, receive under both forms. When not celebrating Mass, they receive only the one kind, the consecrated bread. In the early ages of the Church Communion was given to the people under both forms.

The faithful, however, could, if they wished, dispense with one form and receive under the form of bread. This shows that the Church always taught that Christ is entire both under the form of bread and under the form of wine. At one time the faithful received under both forms; now they receive under one form, the form of bread. It is merely a matter of discipline, which the Church could change, if circumstances demanded it. Whether you receive under one form or both, you receive

whole and entire the body and blood of Christ. This is clearly taught by St. Paul in the 11th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, *or* drink the chalice of the Lord *unworthily*, shall be guilty of the body *and* blood of the Lord."

How could a person eating that bread unworthily be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, unless the body and blood of the Lord were there under the form of bread?

Since Jesus Christ is whole and entire under the form of bread, as well as under the form of wine, the practice of the Catholic Church of giving Holy Communion under one form is reasonable.

Good Christians frequently receive their Lord and their God in Holy Communion. He inspires them with feelings of love, gratitude, and adoration. He reminds them to think frequently of their Creator—to give Him their first thoughts in the morning and their last in the evening. He gives them strength to restrain their guilty passions.

Holy Communion is the seed of immortality. "He that eateth this bread *shall live forever.*"

IV. CONFIRMATION.

"Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 17).

BEFORE the coming of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, the apostles were weak and vacillating. One of them betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver; another—the Prince of the Apostles, he

whom Christ afterward made head of His Church— thrice denied his Lord and his God.

After the descent of the Holy Ghost, what a change! What a wonderful transformation! They who before had been as timid as the lamb, as changeable as the chameleon's hue, became now as bold as the lion, as firm as Gibraltar's rock.

In a similar way does confirmation act on the receiver. Confirmation is that sacrament in which, by the imposition of the bishop's hands, we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ. It is the second in the order of the sacraments, because the early Christians were accustomed to receive it immediately after baptism. In the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find the first recorded instance of the administering of confirmation by the apostles. Here we are told that St. Peter and St. John confirmed the Samaritans who had been baptized by Philip. "They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." In a similar way does the bishop, the successor of the apostles, administer confirmation at the present day. First, he turns toward those to be confirmed and says: "May the Holy Ghost come down upon you and the power of the Most High keep you from sin." Then extending his hands over them he prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost.

In the 6th verse of the 19th chapter of the Acts the sacred writer, after telling about the baptism of the disciples at Ephesus, adds: "And when Paul

had laid his hands upon them the Holy Ghost came on them." In the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul mentions confirmation, the laying on of hands, with baptism and penance, as among the principal practices of Christianity.

The Sacrament of Confirmation has been administered to the faithful of every age from the time of Christ until the present. We learn this from the fathers and writers of the various ages. Among them St. Clement says: "All must make haste to be confirmed by a bishop, and receive the seven-fold grace of the Holy Ghost." The practice of administering confirmation is founded on tradition, then, as well as on Scripture. Is it not reasonable to believe that, to practise that which the Christian Church of every age believed and practised?

The apostles of Christ administered confirmation by praying that the faithful may receive the Holy Ghost and laying their hands upon them. The successors of the apostles do likewise. Who will say that this practice is not reasonable? Baptism gives spiritual life; confirmation increases it. Baptism makes persons children of God; confirmation strengthens them, causes them to grow, and makes them strong men and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

All the morality of life is implied in the Sacrament of Confirmation. It strengthens man, gives him courage to confess God; and as sin is the denial of God, whoever has courage to confess *God will practise virtue.*

V. HONORING THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a Virgin . . . and the Virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel being come in said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women” (St. Luke i. 26, 28).

“From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (St. Luke i. 48).

THESE words from St. Luke show that the Catholic practice of honoring Mary is scriptural. We alone fulfil the prophecy, “From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” If Mary was so pure that the archangel Gabriel could salute her as full of grace; if she was so perfect as to be honored, respected, and loved by her divine Son, Jesus Christ, is it not reasonable that we, too, should honor, respect, and love her?

How we honor the sword of Washington! What a cluster of tender recollections clings to the staff of Franklin! Is there a loyal American citizen who does not think with feelings of love and respect of the mother of our Revolutionary hero, or who would not doff his hat at the unveiling of a statue of the sage of Monticello? And why? Is it on account of their intrinsic merit? No. We honor them principally on account of the relation they bear to those three brightest stars in the American firmament. So it is with the honor we show to Mary, the Mother of God. Although she was an example of all virtues, we honor her principally because it was through her instrumentality He was born by Whom we achieved not civil liberty, but the

liberty of the children of God. She did not draw lightning from heaven, nor the sceptre from kings; but she brought forth Him Who is the Lord of heaven and King of kings.

The principal reason, then, why we honor Mary is because she is the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This honor consists in love, respect, and veneration. We love her with an interior love, a love proceeding from the heart; nor should we fear to let this love appear outwardly. When others revile her, speak disrespectfully of her, we should shrink from the very idea of acting similarly toward her. We should then remember that she is the Mother of Our Saviour, and should ask ourselves how we would have acted toward her had we lived in her day and been witnesses of the honor shown her by her divine Son. By so doing we will show her that love which is her due. Our respect, our veneration for her, should be affectionate and deep. When we remember that it was her hand that first lifted from the ground and received in maternal embrace the sacred body of Jesus, just born and just dead; when we think how respectfully Elizabeth greeted her; when we recall to mind the reverent salutation of the archangel; when we consider the honor shown her by the apostles and by her own divine Son, can we help feeling a deep love, respect, and veneration for her? You see, dear reader, honoring Mary is scriptural and reasonable.

But if we should honor her principally because she is the Mother of God, we should also honor her because she is the peerless glory, the matchless

jewel of her sex. She constitutes a sole exception to a general law. Sin never contaminated, never touched her fair soul. This is what we mean by the Immaculate Conception.

God created the first man free from sin. But he transgressed the law of God, and, by his transgression, all his posterity are born in sin and conceived in iniquity. For St. Paul says: "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). But God promised that the woman, Mary, should crush the head of the serpent. Now if she was to crush the head of the serpent, it was fit that she should never be under his power, that she should be pure, free from sin of every kind.

There have been exceptions to all general laws. At the time of the deluge Noe was saved. Lot was saved from the destruction of Sodom. In like manner, the Blessed Virgin is an exception to the general law that all sinned in Adam. Isaias and St. John Baptist were sanctified in their mother's womb. Was it any more difficult for God to sanctify Mary at the moment of her conception, at the moment of the union of her soul with her body? God chose His own Mother. If He had the power to choose her did He not also have the power to preserve her from original sin? And does it not appear to you most fitting that God, the Holy Ghost, should preserve His spouse, and God, the Son, His Mother, from sin of every kind?

"Hail, full of grace," the angel said to her. If she was full of grace, no vacancy was left for sin. Grace denotes the absence of sin, as light denotes

the absence of darkness. Hence if Mary was full of grace, she was never subject to sin: she was always pure and her conception immaculate. It is but natural, then, that we arrive at the belief in the Immaculate Conception, at the belief in the sinlessness, spotlessness of the Blessed Virgin from the very beginning of her existence. If we honor Mary principally because the apostles honored her, because the angel honored her, because God honored her, we honor her, also, because of her Immaculate Conception and total freedom from sin. She was a model of all virtues. Is it not reasonable, then, to honor Mary, to love her, and to believe that she loves us? If we honor the good and virtuous, where can we find a nobler example of virtue than Mary? What a beautiful model Mary is for Christians, and especially for Christian women! Good Catholic mothers are continually urging upon their daughters the necessity of choosing as a model Mary, the true type of female excellence. In Mary you find all that is tender, loving, constant, and true. In her you find all virtues. In her humility she refused the highest honors; while in patience she endured more anguish and agony than any other creature on earth.

Mary is a creature of God. As the praise we bestow on a beautiful picture redounds to the glory of the artist, so the honor we give Mary redounds to God, since we honor her for His sake. Let us honor her. That person who honors the Blessed Virgin; who loves, respects, and venerates her as the Mother of God; who takes her as a model and

imitates her virtues; who prays to her in trials and afflictions and asks her intercession with her divine Son, does not only act in a reasonable manner, but such action is certain to make the path through this world smooth and easy and at the same time safe to a life of *eternal happiness*.

VI. CONFESSION OF SIN.

“Whom when He saw He said: Go, show yourselves to the priests” (St. Luke xvii. 14). “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained” (St. John xx. 23).

THE whole of the life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be summed up in these words of the Acts: “He went about doing good.” He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and raised the dead to life.

The healing of the body, however, was to Him a secondary object. The healing of the soul was His mission on earth. He frequently called the attention of His followers to this. For example, He cured the man of the palsy to prove that as man He had the power to forgive sins. Another example is when He gives us in the cure of the lepers a figure of sin and its cure.

Leprosy has always been considered a figure of sin. As leprosy covers the body and makes it disgusting and frightful to behold, so sin covers the soul and makes it hideous in the sight of God. The Old Law required lepers to separate themselves from society until their cure was certified to by the priests who were appointed for this purpose.

Our Lord has been pleased, in the New Law, to institute a similar method for the cure of the more fatal leprosy of sin. The spiritual leper, the sinner, is to show himself to the priest, make known the diseased state of his soul, and submit to the inspection and treatment of the priest, who is the divinely appointed physician of the soul. But should we not go directly to God, since God alone has power to justify us? It is true, God alone can effect our justification; but He has appointed the priest to judge in His place and pass sentence in His name. To the priests He has said: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 18); and again: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (St. John xx. 23). These two texts clearly show that auricular confession as practised in the Catholic Church was taught by Christ. For how could the apostles and their successors, the pastors of the Church, know what sins to bind and retain and what sins to loose and forgive unless the sins were confessed to them and they were allowed to judge?

No matter how numerous or how great these are, provided they are confessed with a sincere repentance, they will be forgiven. And they will be forgiven by the power of the priest. Properly speaking, God alone has power to forgive sins. But no one will deny that He has power to confer this power on others. He communicated this power to His apostles and commanded them, in turn, to

communicate it to others by means of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

That Our Saviour communicated this power to His apostles is evident from the words of St. John: "As the Father hath sent Me I also send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." But sin was to continue till the end of the world. Hence the necessity of the means of forgiving sin being coextensive with sin. As the people receive from the priests the Word of God and the cleansing from sin in baptism, so also do they receive from them the cleansing from sin in confession.

It is certain that the apostles conferred the power of forgiving sins upon others, if we find that those whom the apostles ordained exercised this power. But we find this to be the case.

From the time of Christ until the present the writers of every age tell us that confession of sins was practised. St. John, who lived until the beginning of the second century, says in the 1st chapter of his First Epistle: "If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity."

St. Cyprian, who wrote in the third century, says: "Let each of you confess his faults, and the pardon imparted by the priest is acceptable before God."

St. Ambrose, in the fourth century, wrote: "The poison is sin; the remedy, the accusation of one's crime. The poison is iniquity: confession is the remedy."

St. Augustine, who lived in the fifth century, seems to be talking to some people of the present

day, who say they confess in private to God, when he says: "Let no one say to himself, I do penance to God in private, I do it before God. Is it then in vain that Christ hath said: 'Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'? Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church? Do we make void the Gospel? void the words of Christ?"

These first five centuries were the golden age of Christianity. All admit that the doctrines and practices of those early centuries were pure and undefiled, as they came from Christ. But among the practices of the time we find confession. Hence it is a reasonable practice, because conformable to Christ's teaching. We might continue quotations from writers of every century from the sixth to the nineteenth, showing that the teaching and practice of confession did not vary through the lapse of ages from the time of Christ until the present day. But this is unnecessary. The quotations from the first five centuries show that the power of forgiving sin was not only communicated by Christ to His apostles, but by them to their successors by means of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. What would be the necessity of this power if they could not exercise it in confession? If, as some say, priests invented confession, some one ought to find out and tell us when and where it was invented, and why they did not exempt themselves from such a humiliating practice.

Confession alone, however, will be of no avail without contrition. Contrition is a sincere sorrow and detestation for sin with a firm determination

to sin no more. To the truly humble and sorrowful sinner confession is not a punishment, but a remedy for a tortured conscience. The most painful secret to be kept by a heart not yet corrupted by disease is the secret of sin and crime. The soul that loves God, hates sin and desires to separate herself from it. To this desire is associated the desire of expiating it. All, from the mother who questions her child about wrong-doing to the judge who interrogates the criminal, recognize in spontaneous confession an expiatory power.

Confession, it is true, is necessarily accompanied by some shame and humiliation. This humiliation is diminished by the knowledge that it is of divine origin and that eternal silence is divinely imposed upon him who receives it. Priests never divulge what they know from the confessional. They have been ill-treated, as was Father Kohlman in this country; have even been tortured and cruelly put to death, as was St. John Nepomucene, in order to extort from them knowledge they gained in the confessional, but without avail. For what they knew through the tribunal of penance, they knew as ministers of God. And as it is better to obey God than man, no minister of state could force them to divulge that which the laws of God forbid.

Only sinners who, after a thorough preparation, a sincere sorrow, and a good confession, can realize the soothing and beneficial effects of confession, and feel with David, "Blessed are they whose sins are forgiven." If you have ever noticed such after leaving the confessional you could see joy beaming

on their countenances, as if a heavy burden had been removed.

Confession quiets the conscience. But this is only one of the benefits it confers upon those who practise going to confession. It has also a salutary influence upon their morals; for one of its necessary conditions is promise of amendment.

The pagans of the first centuries were aware of the guiding and reforming power of the confessional. Voltaire, the leading infidel of the last century, one who made sport of everything Christian, says that "there is, perhaps, no wiser institution, and that confession is an excellent thing, a restraint upon inveterate crime, a very good practice to prevent the guilty from falling into despair and relapsing into sin, to influence hearts full of hate to forgive and robbers to make restitution—that the enemies of the *Romish* Church who have opposed so beneficial an institution have taken from man the greatest restraint that can be put upon crime." While his every-day experience forced these words of praise from the arch-infidel, his hatred of the Church creeps out in the word "*Romish*."

Confession of sin, as we have seen, is a *reasonable practice*, because it was taught by Jesus Christ, and by His apostles and their successors from Christ's time until the present; but *especially* because it has the power of soothing and pacifying the conscience by freeing it from the torture of sin, the poison of crime. It is not strange, then, that it is so dear to virtuous souls. It is offensive only to those whose hearts are so hardened as to blunt the sting of remorse. Confession is Christianity using its moral

power to correct and perfect the individual. In the confessional the minister of God is continually coming in contact with hearts in which reigns an idol that he overthrows, a bad practice that he causes to cease, or some injustice that he has repaired.

Confession is one of the gates by which Christianity penetrates the interior man, wipes away stains, heals diseases, and sows therein the seeds of virtue. The lives and experience of millions are witness of the truth of this. Is it not, then, a reasonable, a beneficial practice? It is only the malicious or the ignorant who calumniate the practice and the consecrated minister who sits in judgment in the sacred tribunal. Those who lay aside their prejudice and study the question soon become convinced of its divine origin. A little study and reflection will show them that confession of sin benefits society by preventing crimes that would destroy government, cause riots, and fill prisons; that it promotes human justice, makes men better, nobler, purer, higher, and more Godlike; that it soothes the sorrowful heart whose crime might make the despairing suicide; and that individuals and families who frequently, intelligently, and properly approach this fountain of God's grace will receive His blessing here *and a pledge of His union hereafter.*

VII. GRANTING INDULGENCES.

“Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven” (St. Matt. xviii. 18).

OF the many practices of the Church, few have been the cause of more controversy than that of granting indulgences. Though not the cause, the granting of an indulgence furnished a pretext for Luther’s apostasy. Leo X., who was Pope at that time, desiring to complete St. Peter’s at Rome, appealed to all Catholics for financial aid. There was certainly nothing wrong in this. With these alms it was intended that the most magnificent Christian temple in the world would be completed.

“Majesty, Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.”

All who contributed toward the completion of St. Peter’s and complied with the necessary conditions, were granted an indulgence.

The alms were not one of the indispensable conditions. Those conditions were a sincere repentance and confession. Hence, those who did not contribute could gain the indulgence. Perhaps the Dominican Tetzl, who was chosen to announce the indulgence, exceeded his powers and made them serve his own ends.

His action in the affair was not approved by Rome. If it is certain that the Pope did nothing wrong in asking for aid to build that beautiful

monument to religion, it is equally certain that he did nothing wrong, that he did not exceed the limits of his powers when he granted the indulgence. In order to understand this, we must have a clear idea of what is meant by an indulgence.

You frequently hear it said that it is the forgiveness of sin, or that it is a permission given to commit sin. It is neither the one nor the other. An indulgence is not the forgiveness of sin. In fact, an indulgence cannot be gained until sin has been forgiven. One of the necessary conditions for gaining an indulgence is confession.

Neither is an indulgence a license, a permission to commit sin. No one, not even God Himself, could give permission to commit sin. For God is all good, and although all powerful, He cannot sanction that which is evil, bad in itself. It would be contrary to His very nature. An indulgence, then, is not what it has been painted. Having seen what an indulgence is not, let us see what it is. It is a remission of the whole or a part of the debt of temporal punishment due to sin after the guilt and eternal punishment have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance.

In the early ages of the Church notorious sinners, after being absolved, were sentenced to long public penances. By sincere sorrow, an indulgence or remission of some of the time was granted them. Public confession and public penances have passed away. These public penances are replaced by pious devotions. Upon the performance of certain pious devotions the Church at times grants an indulgence; that is, a remission of such temporal

punishment as is equivalent to the canonical penances corresponding to the sins committed.

Attached to every mortal sin, besides the guilt, is the punishment incurred. This punishment is eternal and temporal. That there is this twofold punishment we learn from various places in the Bible. We have an example in the sin of David. God sent the prophet Nathan to warn him of his guilt. When Nathan rebuked the king, he confessed his sin with signs of true contrition. Then Nathan told him that God had forgiven his sin, but that many temporal punishments would follow. When God forgave the sin, the guilt and eternal punishment were taken away; but temporal punishment remained. Other examples could be cited, but this is sufficient to show that there is a twofold kind of punishment—eternal and temporal. In confession the guilt and eternal punishment are taken away, but not always the temporal punishment. This temporal punishment is what is taken away in whole by a plenary and in part by a partial indulgence.

In a similar manner we have a twofold punishment attached to crime in this world. A man commits a crime. He is sentenced to a term in the penitentiary. After spending his time of punishment he comes back to society, but finds he has another punishment to undergo in being avoided by his friends and others.

The practice of granting indulgences is founded on many passages of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament. In the 12th chapter of the Book of Numbers we learn that Mary, the sister of Moses, was forgiven a sin which she had committed. But

God inflicted upon her the penalty of leprosy. This was a temporal punishment. By the prayer of Moses an indulgence was granted; for God took away the temporal punishment.

Our divine Lord left with His Church the power of granting indulgences, as we learn from His words taken from St. Matthew: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven." This promise implies the power of loosing not only from sin and its eternal punishment, but also the power of releasing the bond of temporal punishment, of freeing from everything that would prevent the soul from entering the kingdom of heaven. St. Paul granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, as we learn from the 2d chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. By the power and authority which he received from Christ, he granted the Corinthian pardon from performing a certain penance. This penance was a temporal punishment. The apostle took away the temporal punishment. That is an indulgence.

Non-Catholics grant a kind of plenary indulgence to every one by saying that works of penance are unnecessary. The practice of the Catholic Church of granting an indulgence only to the deserving is certainly more conformable to Scripture as well as more reasonable.

Experience teaches us the utility of indulgences. They encourage the faithful to frequent the sacraments, to repent, to do acts of penance, and perform works of piety, charity, and devotion.

A practice productive of such beneficial results is reasonable; it is also reasonable because it is

sanctioned by Scripture and the Church of every age. For God would not sanction it nor would the Church practise it if it were *not conformable to reason*.

VIII. THE LAST SACRAMENTS.

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him” (St. James v. 14, 15).

BY these words St. James admonishes Christians when sick to do that which Our Saviour had previously directed to be done. This you will learn from the 6th chapter of St. Mark: “And [the apostles] anointed with oil many that were sick.”

The historians of the first centuries tell us that the early Christians were as anxious to receive the last sacraments as are the Catholics of our own day. St. Cesarius, in the fifth century, writes: “As soon as a person falls dangerously sick, he receives the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Then his body is anointed, and thus is fulfilled what stands written: ‘Is any man sick among you? Let him call in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil.’” What the Christians of the first centuries did, we do; and we do it by the direction of Jesus Christ and of St. James.

Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction are administered to the sick and are known as the last sacraments. The priest first hears the sick person’s confession, then he administers Holy Communion. Afterward he administers the Sacrament of Extreme Unction—last anointing.

This sacrament aids the sick to bear their sufferings with patience. It wipes away sin, even mortal sin if the person is unable to confess; and it purifies the soul for its entrance into heaven. The other sacraments assist us in making our lives holy like the life of our divine Model. This sacrament assists in making our death holy, like the death of Jesus. The Sacrament of Baptism met us at our entrance into this world; the Sacrament of Extreme Unction will be our guide at our departure to the other world. Religion, which rocked us in the cradle of life, will lull us to sleep in the cradle of death.

Go to the bedside of the dying Catholic and you will see the reasonableness of the practice of calling the priest to administer the last sacraments. After the sacraments have been administered, peace and joy and contentment are visible on the countenance of the sick person. He clings no more to the things of earth. His thoughts are centred in heaven. The minister of God consoles him with the thought of immortality and the resurrection of the body. He soon hears the singing of the angelic choir; and breathing the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, his soul takes its flight to the *regions of eternal bliss*.

IX. PRAYING FOR THE DEAD.

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

NO one will deny that the practice of praying for the dead is reasonable, if the dead are benefited by our prayers. That our prayers are ben-

eficial to the departed we will endeavor to show. We are taught by revelation that besides heaven and hell, a state of everlasting pleasure and a state of eternal pain, there also exists a middle state of punishment for those who die in venial sin, or who have not sufficiently satisfied the justice of God for mortal sins already forgiven.

The people of God in the Old Law believed, and Jesus Christ and His apostles in the New Law taught, the existence of this middle state. In the Second Book of Machabees, quoted above, we read that the pious general Judas Machabeus having made a collection, "sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifices to be offered for the dead [soldiers], thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection [for if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead], and because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." If prayers were not beneficial to the dead, God would not have sanctioned them.

This is exactly the practice of the Catholic Church. We pray and offer sacrifices for the souls in purgatory, just as Judas Machabeus did. Even if the Books of Machabees were not inspired, it is historically true that the Jews and almost all nations of antiquity believed in the existence of purgatory and the utility of prayers for the souls detained there. This universal consent is the voice

of nature and of God. Hence we see that the practice of praying for the dead is reasonable.

This practice is in accordance with the teaching of Christ. In the 12th chapter, 32d verse, of St. Matthew, He says: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come."

These words teach us that some sins will be pardoned in the life to come. They cannot be pardoned in heaven, since nothing defiled can enter heaven; nor can they be pardoned in hell, out of which there is no redemption, for "their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched." Therefore, there must be a state in the next world where sins will be forgiven, and we call that place or state purgatory. And the existence of purgatory implies the necessity of praying for those detained there. The belief in the existence of purgatory and the practice of praying for the faithful departed have existed in the Church from the time of its foundation.

Tertullian, who lived in the second century, considered it a solemn duty, whose obligation came down from the apostles, to offer sacrifices and prayers for the faithful departed. St. Augustine says: "The whole Church received from the tradition of the fathers to pray for those who died in the communion of the body and blood of Christ." The dying request of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, is well known. "I request you," she said, "that wherever you may be, you will remember me at the altar of the Lord." And he assures us that he frequently and fervently prayed for her soul.

The teaching of the Church of every age confirms the teaching of the Old and New Testament regarding purgatory and praying for the dead. To one who believes in heaven and hell, a place of eternal pleasure and of eternal punishment, the doctrine of purgatory must appear as a necessity, and the practice of praying for the dead reasonable. For it is certain that nothing defiled can enter heaven. But it is possible that many die guilty of but slight sins. Therefore, it must be said that these are damned, which is impious and absurd; that what is defiled can enter heaven, which is unscriptural; or that there is a purgatory, a state in which such souls are made pure as the driven snow, so that they can enter into the presence of their Maker. For an infinitely just God cannot condemn to the same eternal punishment the child who dies guilty of a slight fault and the hardened murderer. No. He will render to every one according to his works.

The doctrine of purgatory, then, is reasonable as well as scriptural and traditional. Reasonable, too, is the practice of praying for the dead, for they are still members of the Church. All the members of the Church, consisting of the church militant on earth, the church triumphant in heaven, and the church suffering in purgatory, are one family bound together by the bond of charity. The members of the Church on earth pray to those in heaven, who love us and pray for us; and we pray for those in purgatory. They are God's friends deprived of heaven for a time. As those in heaven rejoice when one sinner does penance, so those in purgatory hear us, see us, love us, and are helped by

our prayers. We love them and never cease to pray for them and offer the Holy Sacrifice for them. Even the unbeliever will stand or kneel by the remains of his departed friend and offer a prayer for him thus showing that praying for the dead is reasonable and the natural dictate of the human heart.

How sweet the consolation to the dying person who, conscious of his many imperfections, knows he will not be forgotten by his friends! How natural, how reasonable, how consoling this practice of praying for the dead! How beautiful this intercourse of prayer between the child and the deceased parent—between husband and wife—between friend and friend—between life and death! What a reasonable, what an excellent feature of our holy religion to impel the heart of man to virtue by the power of love, and make him feel that his prayers may assist some rescued soul to an eternal *position at the throne of the Most High!*

X. PRAYING TO THE SAINTS.

“And may the angel that delivereth me from all evils bless these boys” (Gen. xlvi. 16). “So I say to you there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance” (St. Luke xv. 10). “For in the resurrection they [the saints] shall be as the angels of God in heaven” (St. Matt. xxii. 30).

THE saints are friends of God. They are like the angels in heaven. We honor them, not as we honor God, but on account of the relation they bear to God. They are creatures of God, the work of His hands. When we honor them, we

honor God; as when we praise a beautiful painting, we praise the artist.

We do not believe that the saints can help us of themselves. But we ask them to "pray for us." We believe that everything comes to us "through Our Lord Jesus Christ." With these words all our prayers end. It is useful, salutary, and reasonable to pray to the saints and ask them to pray for us. No doubt all will admit the reasonableness of this practice if the saints can hear and help us.

That they hear and help us is evident from many passages of Scripture. The patriarch Jacob would not have prayed to the angel to bless his grandchildren, Manasses and Ephraim (as we learn he did from Gen. xlviii.), unless he knew the angel could do so.

We are informed (Luke xv.) that the angels rejoice when one sinner does penance. We are also informed (Matt. xxii.) that the saints are like the angels—*i.e.*, have the same happiness and knowledge.

Hence the saints, as well as the angels, can hear us, can help us, and are acquainted with our actions, words, and thoughts.

It is generally conceded that it is reasonable to ask pious persons on earth to pray for us. St. Paul, in his epistles, frequently asks the Christians to pray for him. "Brethren," he says, "pray for us." It is well known that God was pleased to answer the prayer of Abraham in favor of Abimelech. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world knows of." Now, if we poor sinners here on earth do not pray in vain for one another, will the saints in heaven, the friends of God, who rejoice

when a sinner does penance, pray in vain for us? No. We have hosts of friends in heaven to speak a good word for us. And as a child who has disobeyed his parents wisely asks a better brother or sister to intercede with his parents for mercy, so, too, having disobeyed our heavenly Father by sin, we have recourse to others better than ourselves, to our better brothers and sisters, the Blessed Virgin and saints, to intercede with God for us.

Is not this a reasonable practice?

If your mother or sister crosses the sea she will continue to pray for you. And if she crosses the sea of death will she forget you? No. The love she bore you here will continue in heaven. She will pray for you, and the "Lord will hear the prayers of the just." Ask the saints to pray to your God and their God for you. Honor God by honoring His friends and asking their intercession. And all your friends in heaven will unite in praying to the Father of us all that one day all who love God and His friends, the saints, may be admitted with them into the *company of the Saint of saints, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

XI. CRUCIFIXES, RELICS, AND IMAGES.

"Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them" (Exodus xx. 4, 5).

THIS first commandment teaches us to adore God alone. It does not forbid the making of images, but it forbids the adoring of them, worshipping

them as gods. This would be idolatry. If the making of images were forbidden, it would be improper to have images or pictures of our friends.

It has frequently been said that Catholics are idolaters, because they have in their churches crucifixes, relics, and images of the saints, which they honor. Perhaps many of those who accuse us of idolatry, if asked, could not tell what idolatry is. Idolatry is giving to a creature (whether a crucifix, an image, or any created thing) that honor which belongs to God.

The honor we give those sacred things is a relative honor. We honor them on account of the relation they bear to God and His friends, the saints.

Every Catholic, even the child, is taught the difference between the idol of the pagan and a Catholic image. Pagans looked upon their idols as gods. They thought these senseless objects had power, intelligence, and other attributes of the Deity. They worshipped them as gods and thought they could assist them. Hence they were image-worshippers or idolaters.

Catholics know full well that images have no intelligence to understand, no power to assist them. They do not adore nor serve them. That would be idolatry. It would be breaking the first commandment. They do not say when praying before the crucifix or image of a saint, "I adore thee, O Crucifix;" nor "Help me, O Image." But they say, "I adore thee, O God, Whose cruel death is represented by this crucifix," or "Pray for me, O saint represented by this image."

We have images, pictures, and relics of Our

Lord, His Blessed Mother, and the saints, for the same reason that we have relics and portraits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, or of our relatives and friends. They remind us of the original. Who can look upon the crucifix or upon a picture of the Crucifixion without being reminded of all the sufferings of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

And who can seriously contemplate those sufferings, borne for us so patiently, without being moved to pity and to repentance? Such a person will be moved to say with the heart if not with the lips: "Oh, my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee and caused Thee such suffering. Grant that I may love Thee with my whole heart and never more offend Thee."

Catholics, as we have seen, adore God alone. They honor the Blessed Virgin and saints represented by images. They use these holy pictures and statues to beautify the house of God. These pictures are also a source of instruction. They are a profession of our faith. If you enter a house and see on one side of the room a picture of the Blessed Virgin, Cardinal Gibbons, or of Pope Leo XIII., and on the other a picture of Lincoln, Cleveland, or Washington, you will at once know the religious faith as well as the political belief or patriotism of the occupant.

By the aid of the relics of the martyrs we are reminded of all they suffered for the faith. By the use of religious pictures our devotion is increased and we are stimulated to imitate the virtues of the saints represented.

If it is reasonable to have pictures of our martyred President and relics of our Revolutionary heroes that we may be reminded of their patriotism, it is none the less reasonable to have pictures and relics of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, that we may be reminded of their virtues. By imitating their virtues here, we may be *happy with them hereafter*.

XII. SOME SACRAMENTALS.

“Pray without ceasing” (II. Thess. v. 17). “Every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I. Tim. iv. 4, 5).

BY sacramentals we mean the various prayers, blessings, ceremonies, and pious practices of the Church. Here mention will be made of some of the most common of the sacramentals that have not already been treated. Sacramentals, like sacraments, have an outward sign; the latter, however, were instituted by Christ, the former by the Church, and while the latter always give grace if we place no obstacle in the way, the former do not give grace, but excite good thoughts, increase devotion, and raise the mind to God.

The chief sacramentals that have not been mentioned are the books used by the priest in the performance of his sacred duties, the sign of the cross, holy water, blessed candles, blessed palm and ashes, holy oils, scapulars, medals, Agnus Dei, prayers, litanies, rosary, the Angelus, stations, the funeral service, and various blessings.

The books used by the priest in the performance

of his sacred duties are the *Missal*, which contains the Masses for the various feasts of the ecclesiastical year; the *Breviary*, in which is the office recited by the priest every day; and the *Ritual*, where is to be found the form of administering the different sacraments, the funeral service, and the various benedictions.

The sacramental of most frequent use in the Church is the *sign of the cross*. It is used to remind us of the Passion and Death of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross is the emblem of the Christian, the "sign of the Son of man." It is an act of faith in the principal truths of Christianity. When we say the words, "In the name," we profess our faith in the unity of God, which means that there is but one God; "of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," are a profession of faith in the Trinity—*i.e.*, that there are three divine persons in one God. The form of the cross which we trace with our right hand from our forehead to our breast, and then from the left to the right shoulder, is a profession of faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, Who became man and died on the cross for our redemption. Tertullian and other writers of the early ages of the Church tell us that before every action before rising or retiring, before meals, at every step, "we impress on our forehead the sign of the cross." The Catholic Church of to-day, in accordance with the teachings of Christ, His apostles, and their successors of all time, teaches her children to put their trust in the merits of Jesus Christ's sufferings on the cross, and to do everything "in the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Holy water is water blessed by a priest. During the blessing beautiful prayers are recited. These prayers express the spiritual blessings the Church wishes to follow all who use it. The Church uses holy water in all the benedictions and some of her sacraments. It is placed at the doors of her churches, that all who enter may use it and be reminded of that purity of heart which it symbolizes. Holy water is also kept in the houses of Catholics, to be used in times of trial and when the priest comes to administer the sacraments.

The *blessed candles* used in the service of the Church receive their special blessing on Candlemas Day. We use these lighted candles at different times to remind us of Jesus, Who is the "Light of the world." Catholics always keep a blessed candle in the house. The Church puts a lighted candle in our hand at our baptism, and wishes us to die with one in our hand, to remind us to hope in Him Who is our Light and the light of the world.

On Ash Wednesday *ashes* are blessed and put on the forehead of the faithful in the form of a cross, with the words "Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return," to remind them that they are only dust and ashes. These are the ashes of burnt *palms* blessed the Palm Sunday of the previous year. These palms are blessed in memory of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, when the people spread palm branches along the way. This palm should remind us to perform faithfully our duty if we wish to enjoy the palm of victory.

The *holy oils* are blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday of each year. They are of three kinds: oil of the sick, used in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction; oil of the Catechumens, used in blessing baptismal water and in the Sacrament of Baptism; and Holy Chrism, used in the preparation of baptismal water in the ceremonies of baptism, confirmation, and at the consecration of a bishop, of churches, altars, bells, and chalices. The olive oil used should remind us of Our *Saviour's passion* in the Garden of Olives.

Agnus Deis (blessed by the Pope), *scapulars*, and *medals* are small articles worn by Catholics to remind them of Our Lord (the Lamb of God), of the Blessed Virgin, and of the saints. They are emblems of the Christian, as the starry banner is the emblem of the American; and as the flag of our country shows that we are under the protection of the Government of the United States, so the *Agnus Dei*, *scapulars*, and *medals* show that we are under the protection of Jesus Christ, His Blessed Mother, and His saints.

Prayer is the elevation of our mind and heart to God to ask Him for all blessings, temporal and spiritual. Prayer is necessary to salvation. We are taught in St. Luke xviii. to pray always and faint not. We should pray with attention and devotion, with confidence and humility. We are told in the Lord's Prayer to pray for others as well as for ourselves, and God's choicest blessings will be granted us through Jesus Christ Our Lord. The best of all prayers is the one God taught us—the Lord's Prayer. Other prayers common in the Church are Litanies,

Rosaries, the Angelus, Stations, and the Funeral Service for the dead. The Litanies most in use in the Church are the Litany of All Saints, of the Blessed Virgin, of the Holy Name of Jesus. In these Litanies we ask God to have mercy on us and the saints to pray for us; but we ask everything through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Few practices of the Church are more widespread than the *Rosary* of the Blessed Virgin. It consists of the best of all prayers—the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, three Hail Marys, and the Glory be to the Father; then the Our Father and ten Hail Marys repeated five times. This constitutes the beads, or one-third part of the Rosary. During the recitation of these prayers the mind should be occupied meditating on the principal mysteries of the life of Our Lord. These mysteries are divided into the five joyful mysteries: the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel, the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin to St. Elizabeth, the Birth of Our Lord, the Presentation, and the Finding in the Temple; the five sorrowful mysteries: the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion; and the five glorious mysteries: the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and the Crowning of the Blessed Virgin in Heaven. Any one of these mysteries furnishes sufficient material to occupy the mind of man for hours. These mysteries contain the whole history of the Redemption. The prayers and meditations of the Rosary satisfy the minds of the humblest, while they are sufficient to occupy the attention of

the most exalted and most cultivated. The *Angelus* is a beautiful prayer, said morning, noon, and night. In Catholic countries the bell is rung, when all cease their occupations, kneel, and recite: "The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost"—a Hail Mary. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord—be it done unto me according to Thy Word"—a Hail Mary. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us"—a Hail Mary. The prayer: "Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen." By this beautiful practice we show in a special manner our faith in the Incarnation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The *stations of the cross* are fourteen paintings representing the various stages of the Passion and Death of Our Redeemer. The faithful pass from station to station and meditate upon that feature of the Passion represented by each station. Tradition tells us that from the beginning pious pilgrims were accustomed to tread the path and bedew with their tears the way sanctified by Our Saviour on that sorrowful journey from Pilate's tribunal to Calvary's heights. But Jerusalem falling into the hands of infidels, and many being unable to visit those holy places, permission was obtained to erect in churches fourteen crosses and pictures commemorating these sorrowful acts. From these stations all can meditate upon the sufferings of Our Saviour,

and learn from Him submission to God's holy will, patience, charity, and forgiveness of injuries.

The *funeral service* of the Catholic Church is beautiful, touching, and instructive. After blessing, strengthening, and encouraging us through life with her sacraments; after fortifying our souls for the last great struggle, she follows us beyond the grave with her blessings, her prayers, and her sacrifices. "Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord," she prays; "and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace."

There are various other prayers and blessings used by the Church on special occasions. In fact, the Church blesses everything she uses. This blessing of the priest is not such an absurd thing as some imagine it to be; it is rather a most reasonable practice. It is simply a prayer said by the priest asking God to send His blessing upon the person or thing indicated. People of all denominations say grace before meals, asking God to bless the food they are about to use. This is precisely what the priest does when blessing anything. He uses different forms of prayer ordained by the Church to implore God's blessing upon the water, candles, and other things before using them. This blessing of churches, water, candles, and other things has its foundation on Scripture. We read in the Old Testament of the solemn blessing of the Temple of Solomon. St. Paul tells us that "every creature is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." Churches, water, candles, bells, books, persons, and other things blessed by the Church are creatures. Therefore we are

following St. Paul in blessing them, for every creature is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

We do not claim that those articles that are blessed have any efficacy in themselves; but we hope and pray that God in His infinite goodness and mercy may render those blessed articles beneficial to those using them, may protect them and lead them to *His blessed abode above, where all is peace and light and love.*

XIII. THE CELEBRATION OF FEASTS.

“Seven days shalt thou celebrate feasts to the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord shalt choose” (Deut. xvi. 15). “If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican” (St. Matt. xviii. 17).

FROM these texts we learn that besides the Sunday God wishes certain other days to be observed religiously, and that the Church has the power of designating these days.

As the State sets aside certain national holidays in commemoration of its founder or of the Declaration of Independence, so the Church sets aside these holidays in honor of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints.

Besides the feasts celebrated on Sundays, there are in this country but six holidays of obligation. Three of these are commemorative of events in the life of Our Lord: Christmas, the Circumcision, and the Ascension; two, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, in honor of the Blessed Virgin; and one in honor of God's saints—the Feast of All Saints.

The ecclesiastical year begins in Advent. Advent is a period of about four weeks of penance and

prayer preparatory to the great Feast of *Christmas* and corresponding to the penitential season of Lent before Easter. During the ecclesiastical year, the first of the feasts of obligation in the order of time is the Feast of the *Immaculate Conception*.

It is celebrated on the 8th of December. On this day we commemorate the time when the Blessed Virgin received from the archangel Gabriel's lips the message from God that she was to become the Mother of God the Son, and the Son of God, assuming human nature, entered her chaste body. Immaculate Conception, as you will see in the article on the Blessed Virgin, means that she was always free from sin.

The great Feast of *Christmas*, in honor of the birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated on December 25. This feast is a time of joy and peace to all mankind, and is celebrated by the Church with much pomp and ceremony.

The Festival of the *Circumcision* is kept on the first day of the new year. It is commemorative of Our Lord's strict observance of the law by submitting to the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. We solemnly celebrate the day in honor of our merciful Lord, Who is our model in all things.

Next in the order of time is the Feast of the *Ascension*. It is kept forty days after the grand feast of Easter, and is in honor of Our Lord's glorious ascension into heaven.

The *Assumption* of the Blessed Virgin, celebrated the 15th of August, is commemorative of the glorious taking up to heaven of Mary, soul and body. (This is a pious tradition.)

All Saints' Day is November 1. Every day is a saint's day. There is not a day that the Catholic Church does not celebrate a feast in honor of some special mystery or saint. But as there are more saints in heaven than could be thus specially honored, she sets aside this one day every year in honor of all the saints in heaven.

There are various other important feasts, some of which fall on Sunday; but these we have mentioned being feasts of obligation to be observed as Sunday, it was thought that it would not be uninteresting to give a short explanation of them.

On them we honor God and His special friends. Let us always, by faith, hope, and love, *bear Jesus in our minds and hearts.*

XIV. INFANT BAPTISM.

"Amen, amen, say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 5).

WHILE most Christians admit the necessity of baptism for adults, the Catholic Church is alone in insisting upon the practice of infant baptism. This practice is in accordance with the teaching of St. John, quoted above. It is also in accordance with apostolic teaching and practice.

We read in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that St. Paul baptized Lydia "and her household," and that the keeper of the prison was converted and "was baptized and presently all his family." Among these families it is but reasonable to suppose that there were some infants,

Infant baptism was the practice of the apostles; it was the practice of the Christians of the early Church, as Origen tells us. The Church received the tradition from the apostles to give baptism to infants, and it has been the practice of the Church from the time of Christ until the present.

St. Paul tells us that Adam's sin was transmitted to all his posterity. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed unto all men in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Every infant, according to St. Paul, is born in sin—original sin. But as baptism takes away original sin, and as nothing defiled can enter heaven (Apoc. xxi.), baptism of infants is necessary to open for them the gates of heaven.

Baptism may be validly administered by dipping, sprinkling, or pouring. The method practised in this part of Christendom is pouring the water on the head of the person to be baptized, saying at the same time: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The reasonableness of the practice of baptizing infants will be evident if we remember that Christ taught the necessity of baptism for all when He said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and that He declared little children capable of entering into the kingdom of God when He said: "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Now, if infants are capable of entering heaven (and Christ so declares), they must be capable of receiving baptism, without which Christ says no one can enter the kingdom of God.

While in adults faith and sorrow for sin are required before receiving baptism, no disposition is required in infants.

They contracted original sin without their knowledge; without their knowledge they are freed from it.

By baptism they are made heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

They can be made heirs of property, of a kingdom on earth without their consent; why not also of the kingdom of heaven?

Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments which the Church confers upon man. It cleanses us from original sin (actual sin also if the recipient be guilty of any), makes us Christians, children of God, and heirs of heaven. It prepares us for the reception of the other sacraments. By baptism we all contracted the obligation of believing and practising the doctrines of Jesus Christ as taught us by the true Church. We fulfil this obligation by *leading a truly Christian life.*

XV. THE MARRIAGE TIE—ONE AND INDISSOLUBLE.

“But I say to you that whosoever shall put away his wife excepting for the cause of fornication maketh her to commit adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery” (St. Matt. v. 32). “What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (St. Matt. xix. 5, 6).

FEW practices of the Church have been productive of more good to society than that concerning Christian marriage. The Christian family is the foundation of Christian society, and Christian marriage is the basis of the Christian family. Without

marriage neither the family nor society could exist. Marriage was instituted by God before society existed, and, as a natural consequence, it is subject, not to the laws of society, but to the laws of God and His Church. The principal law and necessary condition of Christian marriage is its unity and indissolubility. It is the union of *one man* with *one woman* for the purposes intended by the Creator, which union is to last as long as both survive. Such was marriage in the beginning; to such it was restored by Our Saviour when He made it a sacrament of His law and a type of His union with His Church.

The practice of the Catholic Church in not permitting a divorce that will allow either party to marry during the life of the other, is clearly taught by Jesus Christ in the 5th chapter of Matthew: "He who puts away his wife maketh her to commit adultery, and he that marrieth her committeth adultery."

No human power can break the bond of marriage. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." It is the work of God. Let no man dare meddle with it. St. Paul teaches the same when he says in the 39th verse of the 7th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty, let her marry whom she will." The practice of the Catholic Church is conformable to this teaching of Christ, St. Paul, the apostles, and their successors.

In defence of this practice of forbidding divorce,

since marriage is one and indissoluble, the Catholic Church has had many a severe conflict. And had she not fought this battle bravely for the sanctity, the unity, and the indissolubility of the marriage tie, Europe and America would to-day be in as degraded a condition as are the Mahometan and other nations where the laws of marriage are disregarded. For divorces are not only contrary to Christ's teaching concerning the sanctity, unity, and indissolubility of the marriage tie, but are also subversive of society. They sever the marriage tie in as much as the law of man can do it. If the marriage tie is loosened, the family is dissolved; and if the family is dissolved, society, the state, falls to ruin. Divorce destroys conjugal love, causes unhappiness, renders the proper education of children impossible, and often leads to terrible crimes. Is it not reasonable as well as scriptural to forbid it?

The Christian husband and wife, knowing the sanctity, the unity, and the indissolubility of the marriage tie, live in love and peace and honor together; together they rear the issue of their union, teaching them to be good children, good citizens, and good Christians; together, after a long, a prosperous, and a happy union, they return to dust; and together they will meet again beyond the confines of the tomb—*yes, they will meet to part no more.*

XVI. RESPECT SHOWN TO ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERIORS.

“We are ambassadors for Christ; God, as it were, exhorting by us” (II. Cor. v. 20). “As the Father sent me, I also send you” (John xx. 21). “Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (St. Mark xvi. 15).

THE respect Catholics have for the bishops and priests of the Church is often a matter of surprise to those not of the faith. They do not understand, as Catholics do, that the priests are “ambassadors for Christ” sent to “preach the Gospel to every creature.” For Christ instituted the priesthood to carry on divine worship, to govern the Church, to preach His doctrine, and to administer the sacraments.

As in the Old Law God chose His priests from among the family of Aaron, so in the New Law He chooses them from among those whom His apostles and their successors see fit to ordain. Priests and other ministers of the Church receive in the Sacrament of Holy Orders the power and grace to perform their sacred duties. If we would but consider seriously for a moment the importance of these duties and the great dignity of the minister of God, we would have no difficulty in understanding the reasonableness of the Catholic practice of showing profound respect to God’s priesthood.

The priest is the minister of Jesus Christ, Who chose him that he might obtain for himself the greatest good and in return bestow this good upon his fellow-man. Jesus Christ chose him that he

might aid Him in the work for which He came on earth. What a noble mission! What important duties! What a great dignity! To aid Jesus Christ in saving souls, to teach them the truths of salvation, to loose them from their sins, to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice for them, to pray for them, to minister unto them, and to fill them with Heaven's choice blessings; for such a high mission, for such important duties did Jesus Christ choose the priest. If his duties are so important, his dignity must be correspondingly great.

On the banks of the lake of Genesareth the Great Teacher chose Peter as His vicar and head of His Church. As the pontiff could not be everywhere, Peter and the other apostles imposed hands on others as the needs of the growing Church demanded. They understood that it was by a living, teaching ministry this work of salvation was to be carried on. For we find it recorded in the 14th chapter of the Acts that Paul and Barnabas ordained priests in Lystra and Iconium.

Paul also consecrated Titus Bishop of Crete, for the express purpose of ordaining others. Thus we see that as Christ was sent by the Father, the apostles by Christ, so, too, is the priest invested with the same power "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12), and that no one but a priest divinely called, rightly ordained, and legitimately sent has power from God to teach God's words to the faithful. He is the ambassador of God, commissioned to do His work with His authority; the vicar of Christ continuing the work

He commenced; and the organ of the Holy Ghost for the sanctification of souls. He is ever imitating his Model, going "about doing good." He devotes his life to alleviate the sufferings of men. To spend one's life instructing man is but second in importance to alleviating his sufferings. This the priest is ever doing. He rescued us from barbarism; saved for us at the risk of his life the Holy Scriptures, the classics of Greece and Rome, and the writings of the fathers; founded the great universities of Europe; and is to-day, as in the past, the greatest educator in the world. He does all this for love of God. Do you wonder, then, that Catholics love and revere their priests?

Nowhere can there be found a body of men or a series of rulers so venerable, so renowned for wisdom, justice, charity, and holiness, as the popes, bishops, and priests of the Catholic Church in every age, *from the time of Christ until the present.*

XVII. CELIBACY.

"He who is unmarried careth about the things of the Lord, how he may please God" (I. Cor. vii. 32).

THE Catholic Church recognizes matrimony as a holy state. She recommends celibacy to those desiring greater perfection, and enjoins it on her priests because, as St. Paul says, "He who is unmarried careth about the things of the Lord."

It is said that the life of the priest is a hard, lonely one, and that it is unscriptural. Let us see. That his life is one of hardships is certain. His

path is by no means one of roses; it is rather one covered with thorns. The young man knows this well before he enters it. With a full knowledge of its duties and responsibilities, he willingly enters the priesthood. He knows well that it is a life full of trials and crosses. He knows, too, that the whole life of Jesus Christ, from the stable of Bethlehem to the Cross on Calvary's heights, was one continuous trial, cross, mortification; and that the life of every follower, especially every minister, of Jesus Christ should be fashioned after that of his divine Model. "If any man will come after Me," He says in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew, "let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." The disciple, the minister of Christ, is not above his Master; and it is not becoming that the path of the disciple or minister should be covered with flowers while that of the Master was strewn with thorns and sprinkled with His own precious blood.

Yes, the priest's life is one of trials, crosses, and hardships. But the more trials he has to bear, the more crosses he has to carry, the more hardships he has to endure, the greater is his resemblance to his model, Jesus Christ; and if he bears those trials, crosses, and hardships, which he shares with his Master here, with a proper spirit, the more certain he is of sharing with Him a happy eternity hereafter.

But is the life of celibacy unscriptural? No. In fact, few questions are more clearly defined in Holy Scripture than that of religious celibacy. St. Paul, in the 7th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, says: "I would have you without solicitude.

He who is unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, how he may please God; but he who is married careth about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and is divided. And the unmarried woman and virgin thinketh about the things of the Lord, how she may be holy in body and spirit. But she that is married thinketh about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. Therefore," he concludes, "he that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well; and he who giveth her not doth better." Could language be clearer? Marriage is good; celibacy is better.

"He that is unmarried careth about the things of the Lord, how he may please God." This teaching of St. Paul is the teaching of the Church—that marriage is honorable, is good, but that there is a better, a holier state for those who are called by the grace of God to embrace it.

Religious celibacy is one of the principal reasons why the Catholic priest and missionary will risk all dangers, overcome all obstacles, face all terrors, and in time of plague expose himself to death in its most disgusting forms for the good of his fellow-man.

All are acquainted with the noble examples of numbers of priests and sisters of charity who, at the risk of their own lives, voluntarily nursed the sick and dying during the yellow-fever scourge in the South a few years ago. Do you think they would have done so had they families depending upon them? No: they would have cared for the things of this world. Jesus Christ has said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man

give up his life for his fellow-man." This the good priest is ever doing, ever ready to do. Although death stares him in the face, he never shrinks from his post of duty, never abandons his flock while there is a wound to heal, a soul to save.

When his duty calls him, he is not afraid of death, because St. Paul says: "*He who is without a wife is solicitous about the things of the Lord.*"

XVIII. CONCLUSION.

"If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments" (St. Matt. xix. 17).

WHEN Jesus Christ died on the cross for us, He did so in order to lead us into life, to open heaven for all mankind. How important our salvation must be, then, for which Christ shed His precious blood. If it is important, He must have taught us how to attain it. This, too, He did by the words, "keep the commandments."

To assist us in keeping the commandments He left a representative on earth. His Church, whose ministers were to teach all nations, is this representative. To her He said: "He that hears you, hears Me."

The night before He died He instituted the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, saying: "This is My body. . . . This is My blood which shall be shed for you." He then gave the apostles and their successors power to do what He had just done: "Do this in commemoration of Me." He also gave them power to baptize, to forgive sins, to bless, to

be "dispensers of the mysteries of God." He gave them power to confer these powers on others. "As the Father sent Me [*i.e.*, with the same power] I also send you." To these apostles and their successors He spoke when He said that He would remain with them until the consummation of the world. To them and the Church He said: "He that hears you hears Me." What the Church teaches, then, Christ teaches.

As, in the natural order, man is born, grows to manhood, is nourished, and if sick needs proper food and remedies: so, in the supernatural order, there is a birth, it is Baptism; there is a manly growth, it is Confirmation; there is a nourishing food, it is the Holy Eucharist, the Bread of Life; there is a medicinal remedy against death, it is Penance; and there is a balm to heal the wounds, the scars, of sin, it is Extreme Unction. These are some of the channels through which God's grace flows into our souls to assist us to keep the commandments.

The practices of the Church naturally flow from her teachings. She teaches that there is but one God, the creator and Lord of heaven and earth and all things; that man by his reason alone can find out this truth; that the order, beauty, and harmony of the works of nature show God's work; but that there are some truths which the deepest intellect of man can never fathom. Hence she teaches that God has revealed certain truths; such as the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Blessed Sacrament. When we know that God has revealed these truths we are acting reasonably not only in believing them, but also in manifesting

our belief by practices of respect, adoration, and love.

The Church teaches that we must not only believe, but practise our religion. For faith alone will not save us. "Faith without works is dead." To have these works we must "keep the commandments." We must love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. All the commandments are comprised in this. In fact, the essence of Christianity is charity.

Where will you find charity practised in reality except in the Catholic Church? If you wish to see the truth of this visit our larger towns and cities, and you will find hundreds of hospitals, asylums, schools, and other charitable institutions in which are thousands of the children of the Catholic Church, who have left everything to alleviate every ill that flesh is heir to, and follow the meek and humble Jesus in His mission of love.

The Catholic Church alone teaches, as Jesus Christ taught while on earth, the duty of penance. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." According to this teaching of Christ, the Church sets aside the penitential season of Lent and other times of mortification.

The Church also teaches that we must not only be faithful in the observance of the practices of religion, but that we must also live in peace and justice and charity with all mankind, and die with a hope beyond the grave. If we love God we will faithfully observe the practices of the Church; these practices will assist us in keeping the com-

mandments. And if we wish to enter into life we must keep the commandments.

We have seen that the various ceremonies and practices of the Catholic Church are dictated by right reason; that they are the rational deduction from Christ's teaching; that they obtain for us divine grace, excite pious thoughts, and elevate our minds to God; and that a true Christian is one who not only believes but also practises the teachings of Christ and His Church. The observance of these pious practices of the Church makes us Christians in fact as well as in name. They assist us to keep the commandments and to live in accordance with our faith. By faithfully observing them, we show that we are not ashamed of being followers of Christ. And if we follow Him, Who is the way, the truth, and the life, we will not walk in darkness; but will enter by the narrow way into the presence of truth itself, *in the regions of eternal light.*

