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Get Ready for
OUR
MISSION



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[See notice of Our Sunday Visitor and of its Catholic Action literature.]

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Get Ready For OUR MISSION

What is the purpose of a mission?

Its purpose is to bring the entire congregation together for intensive consideration of the eternal truths and their application to the individual. It is a spiritual clinic, during which each person submits his soul to a careful diagnosis, and receives the prescription which will arrest and even cure the spiritual disease otherwise certain to lead to spiritual death.

Who conducts the Mission?

Usually members of a Religious Community specially trained for that specific work. They are invited by the pastor to take charge of his congregation for a week, or two weeks, or three weeks, or a month. During this period a program of sermons, spiritual exercises, and devotions is so arranged that no parishioner will have occasion to allege that it was not possible for him or her to attend the services. Usually Mass is said and an instruction given at an early hour in the morning for those who could not otherwise attend. Hence even the busy professional and working-man and woman are expected to be present in church at least twice daily during the week assigned to them.

For those who have more leisure time the Mission partakes of the nature of a Retreat, calling for abstention from social functions, and the passing of the entire day in recollection, meditation and prayer.

Is there usually some advance preparation for a mission?

There should be advance preparation not only on the part of the pastor, but on the part of the people themselves. It must be remembered that those who have lost their first fervor do not deserve those special powerful graces from Almighty God which will restore that fervor. The Lord owes us nothing at any time, and particularly owes us nothing after we will have spurned His many admonitions and graces, after we will have opposed His voice speaking through our own consciences. Therefore each should pray that mercy be shown him and undeserved graces be granted for a very spiritually profitable mission.

Then all the members of a congregation should pray that those who have given up the practice of their religion almost altogether might be inspired to make the mission earnestly, that Catholics who are married to a non-Catholic might be successful in bringing their spouses to make the mission with them; and particularly should the prayers of the innocent ones, the little children, be offered for the thorough conversion of their grown-up brothers and sisters and parents.

The best way for any one to merit special graces for the mission is to do a little advance work himself, by urging others to arrange to cancel all other engagements for the week intended for them, so that they may not be absent from any morning or evening exercise.

In what way will one profit most by the mission?

By a very thorough self-examination, a study of one's principal weaknesses, then by the firmest kind of a resolution of amendment, followed by a serious confession.

If you were afflicted with some physical disease slowly undermining your health completely, your physician would expect you to give him, as far as you would be able to do so, the story of its beginning and of its progress. He would ask what other diseases you have had during your lifetime which might have had some connection with your present affliction. After a correct diagnosis he would prescribe the remedy, and you would naturally be expected to apply this remedy if you hoped to become well.

Now, it is the same with a spiritual disease. You need not tell the spiritual physician, or the confessor, how it started, but you yourself should know this; you should know what occasions or circumstances have, because of your indulgence, aggravated your spiritual malady. Then, evidently, if you would hope to have a permanent cure you must apply the necessary remedies, resolving, in the future, both to avoid the dangers which would again wreck your spiritual health, and to use the sure curative medicine.

If, in your town or city, there lived a physician competent to diagnose and cure any physical malady, people would flock to him from all parts of the country. You have such a spiritual physician regularly in your parish, but for some reason or other you have not availed yourself of your opportunity. But the missionary specialists, who come from the outside, are there for the

one purpose of curing you, and it may be fatal for you not to take advantage of their services.

As you were told above, the Lord owes you nothing, and the present mission may be the last call He will issue to you.

Is it necessary to make a general confession during the time of the mission?

It is not necessary that all people make a general confession, but only those who may have made unworthy confessions. However, it is advisable for all people to review their whole life in their examination of conscience, and then to confess the principal serious faults of their lifetime. Their sorrow or contrition will be the better if they do this, and contrition, as you are aware, is the principal requisite for a profitable confession.

Too many people go to confession and receive Holy Communion through routine, and seem to act on the notion that the recital of the sins, which they can quickly bring to mind, is the only requisite. As a matter of fact, the confession of one's sins without sorrow or any serious thought of amendment may be worse than no confession. We fear that very few people aim at perfect contrition at the time of their monthly or weekly confession, but they should certainly aim at having perfect contrition at the time of the mission.

How can one best awaken perfect contrition?

Perfect contrition flows from perfect love. If you honestly can tell your Creator that you love Him above all things, and that your sorrow is prompted more by the consideration of having offended Him, Who is goodness itself, than of having deserved

IN REPARATION

for the

great amount of money you have wasted on pleasures, often sinful pleasures, make

A Generous Offering

to your parish for the good of your soul before the close of the mission.

Everyone will wish to have a part in meeting the expenses of the mission.

His punishment both in this world and in the world to come, then you have perfect contrition.

The best manner of awakening sorrow is that which a holy Bishop of Spain followed and recommended to others. He says that after having examined his conscience, resulting in the presentation before him of many sins, each bearing his own trade mark, so that he could not disown any if he would, he always made three visits in spirit—the first to Heaven, the second to Hell, and the third to Calvary. Try this.

Visualize Heaven open before you, where you see in fancy myriads of angels basking in the glory of God; you see your own Guardian Angel, some of your deceased relatives, a little brother or sister who had died in baptismal innocence; you see Mary; you see Christ; you imagine you see God. Then say to yourself: "You were created for this same indescribable happiness, but by your sins you have deserved to be excluded from it forever and ever. There is not a single sin in all Heaven, and yet they cover your soul as an ulcer." How easy it is then to be sorry for all your sins and to resolve earnestly never more to commit them, lest all chance of your admission into Heaven be lost.

In the same manner try to visualize hell open before you, where you behold myriads of souls living amid demons in indescribable suffering, hating and cursing one another, steeped in despair because this misery will ever be their portion. Then say to your soul: "My soul, there is thy place. Thou hast sinned far more than many souls which thou beholdest everlastingly excluded from the happiness for which they were created. How can'st thou, who can'st not endure physical pain, who could'st not hold thy finger in the flame of a candle for five

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seconds, continue in sin with the risk of being steeped in suffering forever?

“How easy it is then to turn to God with eyes full of tears, and with a heart full of sorrow, and to protest that never again will you be guilty of the sins, which have made you deserving of such an eternal fate!”

In your visit to Calvary you see Christ hanging on the Cross, suspended by nails, His head crowned with thorns, His face swollen with blows, His whole body torn into shreds. Looking into the face of Jesus you fancy you see Christ staring at you accusingly, as much as to say: “It was you who caused all this suffering for Me by your sins. There are multitudes of other sinners, it is true, but I have been so pained by your offenses, that even if you were the only person living on earth I would have undergone all this suffering to prevent the sins which you have committed.”

How easy it would then be to fall on your knees, acknowledge your guilt, pour out tears of sorrow for having been such an ungrateful criminal, and to promise the loving Savior that you would never again grieve Him through the repetition of such sins!

Excellent as this contrition is, it might be only **inperfect** (although satisfactory for a good confession) because it might have been provoked almost wholly by the thought of the loss of Heaven or the certainty of hell, or by shame for having treated so good a Friend so meanly. But after these considerations how easy it would be for you to turn to God with a heart full of love and to assure Him that, because He is Love Itself, you grieve exceedingly for having ever offended Him; and then to promise Him that you will, by the help of His



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grace, never more offend Him grievously. With such contrition your sins will probably have been forgiven before you enter the confessional.

Your Confession

But kneeling before the priest, with these dispositions, fancy that you are kneeling at the foot of the cross, confessing to Christ Himself, whom, of course, you could not deceive; that after the recital of your sins you see Jesus withdraw His right hand from the arm of the cross, pronounce absolution over you and that you feel a drop of His precious blood fall on your soul, washing it completely.

With full confidence you would then rise like Magdalen, to whom the Savior Himself said: "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much"; you would rise like the man sick of the palsy, to whom Jesus said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee".

Such is the kind of Mission confession you should prepare for. If you do so the Mission will not only be a success in your case, but will be the source of inexplicable happiness, and will help you to make a new start on the road to Heaven.

Has a missionary more power than another priest?

No; but it is customary for the Bishop, in whose diocese the Mission is conducted, to grant special faculties to the missionary so that certain heinous sins, whose absolution may ordinarily be reserved to the Bishop, may be forgiven without the need of special recourse to the Bishop.

But, as we have already declared, people will not only likely profit more by hearing the sermons of a stranger, but by their undivided attention to their souls, and by their

participation in the exercises of the Mission day after day, they will reap unusual graces. Moreover the Church gets behind a mission by bestowing many particular blessings and indulgences on those who take part in it, and usually empowers the missionary, at the final exercise, to impart the Papal Benediction, which carries with it a Plenary Indulgence.

By a Mission people are taken back to their Baptism Day and renew their baptismal promises. They do this not singly and alone, but in unison with every other person in the congregation. It is a mass profession of loyalty; it is like a whole-hearted acceptance of peace after a revolution; it is the breaking of all alliances with the devil, his works and pomps, and a turning to God on the part of the whole parish family; it contains the thrill of victory, celebrated with glad hearts; it represents the congregation possessed "of one heart and one mind", the objective which St. Paul says every congregation of the faithful should strive for.

Between now and the time of holding the Mission regard the words of the Holy Ghost as being directed to you personally: "If today you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts"; "now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."

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