

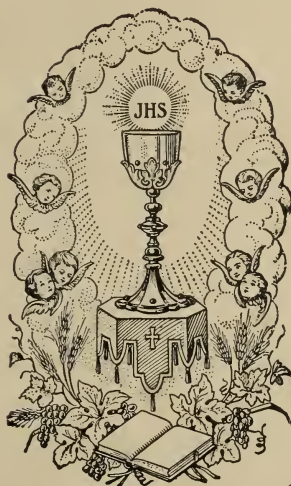
REFLECTIONS

ON THE

† MASS †

by

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REFLECTIONS ON THE MASS

I

- (1) God must provide for His own glory, which requires a divinely-appointed form of worship of infinite power.
- (2) He has provided a perfect sacrifice for the New Law.
- (3) Mass, the historical form of public worship in the Christian era.

(1)

The promotion of His own glory must be the first concern of Almighty God; the benefit of His creatures can have only second consideration. This fact has led some great theologians to maintain that the Son of God would have become Incarnate even had Adam not fallen. At any rate the history of religion, as far back as the Bible records it, shows that the Incarnation of the Son of God was the outstanding interest of the Almighty. It was called to Adam's attention as soon as he realized what he and his descendants had forfeited by his sin. The future great event was revealed to Abraham who was glad even to see it in vision; to kings and prophets "who had desired to see the things" which the contemporaries of Christ would see. In short, the principal message of the prophets and teachers in the Jewish religion related to the future advent of the Emmanuel.

The purpose of the isolation of a chosen people in the Old Law and all God's covenants with them was to prepare the world for the great Redeemer and for the divine Kingdom He would establish, which would last until the end of the world. What the Son of God did for the people among whom He walked, He would do for the people of every century and nation after them. He would be "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and forever."

But what we would have you to understand particularly is that when God Himself provided the form which public worship should take in the Old Law, He instituted the worship known as SACRIFICE, and the several forms of sacrifice had an intimate relation to the infinite sacrifice which the

Son of God would offer on Calvary as an atonement for the sins of mankind, as well as to the perpetual renewal and continuation of that sacrifice in an unbloody manner for His infinite glorification "in every place, from the rising to the setting of the sun."

(2)

David foretold that Jesus would be "a priest according to the order of Melchisedek," who is noted in the first book of the Bible as offering a sacrifice of bread and wine. David foretold that Christ would be a priest "FOREVER" according to that order or rite. The Sacrifice of the Cross was sufficient to make atonement to the Holy Trinity for mankind's sin. But the New Law must have regular sacrificial worship as did the Old Law, since the worship of God is the first object of religion. The Kingdom of God on earth, founded by the Son of God in Person, enjoying His actual presence "all days," and honored by the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost, must have a perfect sacrifice, an adequate sacrifice, which means AN INFINITE SACRIFICE for the continued glorification of God and for the application of the merits of Calvary's Sacrifice to individual souls. The Church is a Kingdom as divine as Heaven itself is; its mission in this world is to continue what Christ did in Person on earth: it must possess an influence capable of counteracting the crime and evil committed day by day by hundreds of millions.

Leave the Mass out of consideration and it would be impossible to defend the theory that the human race exists primarily for the furtherance of God's glory. Everyone knows that two-thirds of the inhabitants of the world, even at this day, are utterly ignorant of God and are given to the worship of idols. Everyone is aware that even within the Kingdom of Christ sinners are greatly in excess of saints. The devotion of the few could never appease God for the crime and indifference of the many. But even if every human being were a saint, the honor which would go up to Heaven would be only finite and limited. The honor must be infinite

and unlimited if it is to be worthy of God. Man could not provide an infinite worship; hence God did it Himself. Is not God the direct author of nearly all that the Church has, such as her teachings, her Sacraments? Why should He not be the author of her worship, which takes account of God's own interests?

(3)

The Sacrifice of the Cross was preceded by the sacrifice of the Last Supper, which was intimately related to it. The Body which He gave to the Apostles under the form of bread at the Last Supper, Jesus declared was the Body which would be delivered for mankind on the Cross; the Blood which He gave them under the form of wine He declared was the Blood which would be shed for them on the Cross. He immolated Himself mystically at the Last Supper, and then commissioned the Apostles to do the identical thing which He had done. He had just exercised the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedek, and directed that His priesthood should be continued through the Apostles and their successors, "until I come," namely, at the end of the world. It was through these human agents that He would be "a priest forever" according to that order.

Paul was not one of the Apostles who received this commission directly from Christ, but he refers to his own exercise of that priesthood, calling the bread which he broke the "partaking of the Body of the Lord," and the Chalice which he blessed "the communion of the Blood of Christ."

He reminds the Jews themselves that "We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." There is no longer justification for the slaying of the Paschal lamb since they were merely types of the sacrifice of Calvary and of the Last Supper—the first Mass. The Mass was so widely offered at the beginning of the second century that St. Irenaeus, writing in the year 202, says: "The oblation of the New Covenant is the Lord's Supper; Christ instituted it as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament, and throughout all the world the Church offers this sacrifice." The Church still pre-

serves the wooden altar at which St. Peter and his successors during the era of martyrs said Mass. The Catacombs, in which the early Christians worshipped, are filled with reminders of the Eucharistic sacrifice of which they were the scene.

The existence of the Mass through the centuries; its prominence in the Greek Church which is centuries older than Protestantism; its observance among the Eutychian and Nestorian sects, which date back fifteen centuries, are living proofs of the offering of the unbloody sacrifice by those who were duly ordained for the purpose by the Apostles and their successors. The altar of the New Testament sacrifice was given the place of honor in the churches which Constantine built in Rome immediately after his conversion in the year 325, and in the many churches built by his mother, Helena, in the Holy Land, at Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.



II

- (1) No form of worship so powerful. Purposes for which Mass is offered. Catholics enjoy a great privilege.
- (2) How Protestants lost the Mass. Meaning of vestments, of the Latin language, etc.
- (3) The liturgy of the Mass traced to the first century.

(1)

If the Mass today be essentially the same as Christ's own sacrifice of the Last Supper, which was one with the sacrifice of the Cross, differing only in the manner of offering and in its unbloody character, then there can be no form of religious worship in this world comparable to it. If its Victim and Priest be the same Christ, then the Mass must have infinite power for any purpose for which it is offered. It is offered for one or more of four purposes, which include all the obligations which the creature owes to the Creator, namely, to acknowledge His supreme dominion, to make reparation for the violation of His laws, to thank Him for His favors and graces, to implore spiritual and temporal help. The Mass

alone enables the creature to meet this fourfold duty adequately.

If the Catholic religion enjoyed no other advantage over other religions than the possession of the Mass, it would be infinitely above all of them. If the Catholic people enjoyed no other privilege than to assist at Mass and to benefit by its power, they would be infinitely better off than all other people.

This truth cannot be too much emphasized, and it should occupy more of the thought and attention of Catholics in order that they may the better realize the extent to which they are blessed.

(2)

It is only during the last four hundred years that any who call themselves Christians have been deprived of the Mass, which was lost to Protestant Christians of this era when Apostolic succession was lost by abolition of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, through which candidates for the ministry are empowered and commissioned to "do in commemoration of Him" what Christ at the Last Supper deputed the Apostles and their successors to do in His memory and in His name. They lost the Holy Eucharist both as a Sacrifice and as a Sacrament, and at whatsoever form of worship of God they assist, their worship not only does not exceed their own powers, but falls below that of the people of the Old Law, who had at least divinely-instituted sacrifices, even if they were only shadows of the great realities which were to be enjoyed by those holding membership in the Kingdom of God in the New Law.

Not comprehending the Mass they do not understand that Catholics have more than mere symbols, empty ceremonies, and exterior pomp. They entertain the notion that you are attracted to Mass on Sunday during all sorts of weather by the ceremonial of the Church, which they believe to consist in vestments and candles and incense and orderly movements, with whose meaning you are none too familiar.

You, on the other hand, know that these things would not

attract you to divine services at all. You know that the average Catholic comes out to the Mass which has the least display of ceremony.

Of course, every vestment has its meaning; every movement of the priest is significant; every prayer, every word of the Mass was judiciously chosen. You know that all essential parts of the first Mass offered by Jesus Himself are incorporated in the Mass, associated with official ecclesiastical prayers as replete with unction as with meaning and power.

The Mass is a sacrificial action rather than a combination of prayers, and this explains why it is of little importance whether the Mass be said in the old languages, or whether it be said for the most part in a low tone of voice inaudible to the people. The priest acts as an official ecclesiastical person, and therefore he doffs his secular garb and robes himself in vestments by which Christ is impersonated. The amice represents the cloth by which Christ was blindfolded; the alb, the white garment with which Herod clothed Him; the cincture, the cord by which He was tied to the pillar; the chasuble, showing the outline of a cross, represents Him on Calvary. The altar itself points to the sacrifice. Its candles of beeswax represent Christ's virginal body, their burning during the day-time recalls the trying days of the first century when the Mass was offered in the otherwise dark, underground Catacombs, when the Mass was said over the tombs of martyrs. This explains why relics of martyrs must be enclosed in the altarstone on which the host and chalice rest.

(3)

The liturgy of the Mass is easily traceable to the fourth century when the practice of concealing the teaching of the Church concerning the Holy Eucharist from the Catechumens, or the unbaptized, was abandoned.

It must be remembered that the early Christians lived among the pagans, among whom there was widespread propaganda to the effect that in their sacrifice people feasted on the flesh and blood of human infants. It was deemed wise, therefore, not to speak, except to the baptized, about the

sacrificing of body and blood, and of the eating of flesh and blood in Holy Communion.

The liturgies of St. Peter, of St. Mark, of St. James, are still in use in the Orient, and the Mass is offered in the ancient Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and other languages as well as in Latin. A dead language was not chosen by the Church for the Mass, but languages which were once those of the people who worshipped were retained for many reasons. The Latin language was the language most widely spoken in Europe at the time it was adopted for use everywhere outside of the Near East, and remained a language of culture almost until the Reformation. The Church has retained it for her sacrificial action, while worshippers have the literal translation of it in the books with which they follow the Mass.



III

- (1) It is the Mass that matters. If Mass is what you believe it to be you should attend it more frequently and with greater fervor.
- (2) In the Mass the prophecy of Malachy is fulfilled.
- (3) It is the people's sacrifice as well as that of the priest; they should receive with Him.

(1)

If the Mass is what you have been taught it is, then it is easy to understand that in this world, of all things, "it is the Mass that matters." Accumulate the merits of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of the Apostles, of all the martyrs, of the seraphic saints through the centuries, and their value falls short of that of a single Mass. They were the offerings of creatures; the Mass is the offering of the Incarnate Son of God.

During the Mass the Heavens open, the Son of God descends to the altar, immolates Himself anew in an unbloody manner, gives His glorified body and blood as food to worshippers, in order to unite Himself in that intimate manner to them.

If the Mass is what you believe it to be, then it is clear

why the Catholic Church obligates all her children to attend Mass every Sunday and on feasts which honor the great mysteries of faith, and which we call Holydays of Obligation.

If the Mass is what Catholics believe it to be, isn't it surprising that all do not attend the Holy Sacrifice every day? We are reminded of Christ's words to the people of two favored cities in the Old Law: "Woe to thee Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida, for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long since done penance in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. XI, 21).

In the first and second centuries the Christians attended Mass daily at the risk of their lives; and felt that the reception of Holy Communion was expected of them every time they attended Mass. It was *their* sacrifice as well as that of the priest, who must receive Holy Communion during the Mass.

History records the manner in which the people of Catholic Ireland, of Poland, and of other countries, went to Mass secretly during the days of persecution. Only within the past few years during the persecution of the Church in Mexico hundreds of priests remained with their people and said Mass in private homes at their life's risk.

(2)

The words of the Prophet Malachy are literally fulfilled in our day. The "clean Oblation" is "offered in every place from the rising to the setting of the sun." There is not a minute of the day, not a minute of the night, when the Holy Sacrifice is being offered in tens of thousands of churches throughout Europe; and while Europe is sleeping in the dead of night, thousands of priests in other parts of the world are at the altar. Large congregations are going home from Mass in New York when the first congregations of Chicago convene; in the mountain states the priest is at the altar two hours after all the services are over in New York; and in California three hours longer. As we travel round the world

Mass-time is an hour later every thousand miles, and since the earth is 24,000 miles in circumference and the Catholic Church is everywhere, it is always Mass-time somewhere.

This is an astounding thing to contemplate, and realizing that there is no interruption to the mystical immolation of Christ, no interruption to His prayer: "Father forgive them," we can readily grasp why God should tolerate mankind, so indifferent, so sinful, so criminal.

(3)

The Mass is the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice, and through it man goes to God. In the Mass the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament is prepared, and through it God comes to man. In the prayers which the priest says following the Consecration of the Mass, it is assumed that the people as well as the priest will receive. The eating of the Victim sacrificed was always a part of the ceremonial of the Old Law. Hence the Council of Trent recommends that all who attend Mass receive Holy Communion. Evidently those partake in greatest measure of the fruits of the Mass who receive into their hearts the Victim of Sacrifice.

We begin to assist at Mass at an early age, without the capacity of understanding its significance, without being able to follow the service intelligently, and there is danger of our forming the habit of attending Mass all through our lives without an effort to profit by our opportunity. In every congregation there are many who are present in body because a law compels them to be, but are absent in spirit. They come to church sin-laden and never think of offering the Holy Sacrifice in atonement. They are forgetful of God all through the week and their hearts are not moved even in His presence. They are in need of many graces for the new week's struggles which they do not even ask for. They prefer to attend the Mass which is briefest in duration, and the attendance at which is most convenient for them. They have prayerbooks, with which they could follow the priest from one prayer and action to another, but they leave them at

home. They come at the last moment and rush out of the church as soon as they may.

If "it is the Mass that matters" both in its power to honor God and in its power to help the people, then evidently more should be made of it, and every Catholic should strive to acquaint himself better with all that appertains to it, and to study how to profit most by attendance at it.

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IV

- (1) The priest's remote and immediate preparation. The Mass of the Catechumens.
- (2) People should be present at Mass from the beginning.
- (3) Significance of ceremonies preceding the Offertory.

(1)

Let us now contemplate the ceremonial of the Mass itself and its significance. The Church offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with Christ her head, with a priest as her agent, and in conjunction with the people as members of the kingdom of Christ. In the Mass the priest impersonates Christ, "the Mediator between God and man;" hence, while he acts in the name of the Church, he does so for the benefit of the people.

The Church imposes on the priest a daily remote preparation for the Holy Sacrifice by binding him to the recitation of the divine Office. In Religious Orders a portion of this Office is said in choir immediately before the conventual Mass. The Church has the priest also make an immediate preparation for the Holy Sacrifice through a quiet meditation, and would have him recite certain approved prayers before he vests to go to the altar.

Before he puts on his vestments he washes his hands to signify the purity of soul with which he should approach the Holy of Holies. Then in turn he vests himself with the amice, alb, cincture, stole, maniple and chasuble, saying a special prayer as he puts on each one. The people see him now in his representative character from which he receives his name "priest."

The portion of the Mass which runs from the prayers at the foot of the altar until the Offertory is not of the essence of the Mass. It is for this reason that the Bishop goes through this portion at the throne. It was known in the early days of the Church as the Mass of Catechumens. Those who were under instruction and still unbaptized were permitted to attend this portion of the service only. Those known as the faithful, who were in full union with the Church and capable of receiving Holy Communion, were retained for the whole Mass. Because only those who were permitted to receive Holy Communion might remain, the Church expected them to receive in order that they might have fuller benefit of the Sacrifice, which was "the priest's and theirs."

At a Low Mass the direct participation with the priest by the answering of his prayers is through the Mass-server or acolyte. At a High Mass the choir as well as the Mass-server responds for the people.

(2)

When the priest enters the Sanctuary to go to the altar all the people rise to their feet and remain standing until after the priest will have placed the Chalice on the altar-stone located in the center of the table of the altar, and after he will have opened the Missal and descended to the foot of the altar. The people should all be present at the very beginning of Mass and even a little before it begins, in order that they may collect their thoughts, and form the intention for which they will offer the Holy Sacrifice. They should be in church for the beginning of the Mass because the prayers at the foot of the altar, of which they are accustomed to make little, are calculated to dispose them for the greatest benefit from the Mass.

The priest begins by reciting Psalm 42, whose opening words are: "I will go to the altar of God." The Psalm is recited alternately with the altar boy and therefore with the people. The priest gives expression to his unworthiness and the people encourage him to proceed. Then in the Confiteor, the priest makes a public confession of his unworthiness, and

the people, through the altar boy, ask Almighty God to have mercy on him, to forgive all his faults and even to lead him to life everlasting. Then through the altar boy the people make a public confession of their sins, following which the priest implores pardon and absolution for himself and the people.

Have you not without any special reason at all often come to Mass after this ceremony was over? Have you not often been at Mass when these touching prayers at the foot of the altar were uttered and you had no participation in them?

(3)

Before ascending the altar the priest extends his hands and says: "Let us pray," and as he proceeds towards the altar table he prays silently in the plural asking the Lord to "take away from *us our* iniquities that *we* may enter into the Holy of Holies with pure minds," thus indicating that the people are approaching the altar with the priest. Bending over the altar stone, which he kisses, he still unites the prayers of the people with his in asking that all his sins may be pardoned.

In the early Church it was customary for several psalms to be said at this point, while to-day only an Antiphon and one verse of a Psalm which is closed by the Gloria Patri is said at the Epistle side of the altar. This is known as the *Introit*, or the beginning of the service at the altar. The Introit differs from day to day according to the feast.

Coming to the center of the altar, he, and the people, represented by the Mass-server, implore mercy three times each from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

On practically all feast days the *Gloria In Excelsis* or the Hymn of the Angels at the birth of Christ at Bethlehem is recited or sung. It is composed of three strophes directed respectively to the three Divine Persons, of Whom mercy was just implored. It calls to mind the first purpose of the Holy Sacrifice, namely, the glorification of God. The first salutation to the people is now made in the words, the "Lord

be with you." This is frequently repeated in the Mass. Then from the Missal the priest reads one, two, three or more prayers, called Collects, or a collection of prayers. On important feasts there is only one, calculated to center all attention on the feast; on other days there is often one or more commemorations, in which the intercession of martyrs or saints is invoked whose feasts are celebrated somewhere in the world. Then there is read from the Missal an instruction from Holy Scripture, usually from a letter of one of the Apostles, and hence designated *Epistle*. After this psalms were again sung in the early Church, while to-day only a verse or two of the same are read under the name of *Gradual*.

The book is now transferred to the other side of the altar and a portion of one of the *Gospels* is read. The Church shows her great respect for the revealed word of God by the act of the priest bowing before the center of the altar praying that his heart and lips may be cleansed, in order that he may worthily announce the holy Gospel. The people also show their respect for the words of our Savior or of His Evangelist by rising and standing during the reading of the Gospel. Following the reading of the Gospel the priest kisses it with reverence, and then usually preaches to the people, drawing a lesson from one of its texts.

On all Sundays and on all important feasts the *Nicene Creed* is recited, the people remaining standing, and showing their concurrence in his profession of faith. They bend their knee at the solemn words "and He became Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

The antiquity of this portion of the Church's liturgy is shown by its existence not only in the old religions which have retained the Mass, but by the Episcopalians, the Lutherans and others who have discarded the Mass. Recently we listened to a Lutheran service over the radio and noted that the *Kryie Eleison*, (of course, in English), the *Gloria*, the *Collects*, the *Epistle*, the *Gospel*, and the *Apostles' Creed* were said in the very order in which they appear in the first part of our Mass, or the Mass of the *Catechumens* of old.

The dignity of the position of altar boy, and even of membership in the choir should be brought home very forcibly by the consideration we have made. Whoever answers the prayers of the priest does so in the name of the whole congregation. He becomes a very intimate participant in the Mass, and should, of course, realize the significance of his office better than appearances often lead us to believe he does. The same must be said in only a lesser degree of the choir member. He responds at High Mass in the name of the congregation. Usually he is so far away from the altar and so far in the rear of everybody that he is less reverent in church than the average person in the pew. He too should try to appreciate the intimacy with which he is associated with the Mass and be a worthy representative of the congregation in his responses and in his singing generally.

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V

- (1) It is not all right to come to church as late as the Offertory. People formerly provided the bread and wine.
- (2) The Canon of the Mass preceding the Consecration.
- (3) The Consecration. St. Ambrose on Transubstantiation.

(1)

It is because the portion of the Mass preceding the Offertory is not of its essence that you have been frequently told that you fulfil the obligation of hearing Mass on Sunday if you are present before the beginning of the Offertory. This does not mean that you do not do wrong by coming to church any time before the Offertory. It merely means that you do not sin mortally, and you would not be compelled to hear another Mass. According to the mind of the Church you are expected to be present at this holiest of divine services from the very beginning, and you do sin if, through your own fault, you miss any portion of the Mass.

For many centuries it was the custom of the people to provide the bread and wine used in the Holy Sacrifice and to

distribute among the poor the portion which was not used at the altar. This explains why the custom has grown to take up the collection, or the money offerings of the people, immediately before the Offertory. It is the thought of the Church that your little offering should represent a privation, and that it should be bestowed in relation to the Holy Sacrifice at which you are assisting.

Following his greeting to the people after the Credo, the priest uncovers the Chalice and offers to Almighty God, first the bread, and then the wine, with touching prayers. The elements of bread and wine are to be transubstantiated into the adorable body and blood of Calvary's Victim. In the offering of the bread the Heavenly Father is asked to accept the spotless host not only for the sins and omissions of the officiating priest, but likewise for "all here present, and for all faithful Christians whether living or dead." When he offers the wine in the Chalice he prays that it may ascend to God "as a sweet odor" before His divine majesty for the salvation of those present at the Mass "and for that of the whole world." He then calls on the Holy Ghost to "bless this Sacrifice which is prepared for the glory of God's holy name."

Reciting an appropriate psalm the priest washes his fingers which are soon to hold the consecrated host. Then bowed in prayer at the middle of the altar the priest implores the Holy Trinity to accept the oblation in memory of the Incarnate God, of His Blessed Mother, of St. John the Baptist, of Peter and Paul and of all the Saints whose intercession he invokes on himself and the people present. He now turns to the people with the words "*Orate Fratres,*" asking them to pray that his Sacrifice and theirs may be pleasing to God. The people, in the person of the altar boy, respond with these impressive words: "May the Lord receive this sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of His name, for our own benefit, and for that of all His holy Church."

Even slight reflection must bring home to you the lesson that there is an immense difference between being actually

present at Mass and to pray in your own way at home. Most of the prayers which relate to the people are in behalf of those who are actually present at the Sacrifice.

Now comes one, two, three or four prayers which correspond to the Collects, and are called the *Secrets*, because they are said inaudibly. Usually the thought contained in them is that God might graciously receive the sacred gifts offered and grant gifts spiritual and temporal in return. The concluding words of the last Secret are said loudly and introduce the Preface which, in turn, introduces the *Canon* of the Mass, the most solemn portion, including as it does the Consecration and Communion.

(2)

This portion of the Mass is called the *Canon*, which signifies "*rule*," because the action and the prayers are the same at all times, with the exception of the modification of one prayer on important feasts. In the Preface the note of thanksgiving to God is sounded, just as the note of praise was sounded in the preparatory part of the Mass in the Gloria in Excelsis, and just as the note of propitiation is clearly conveyed when the priest extends his hands over the Chalice and Host immediately preceding the Consecration. By extending his joined hands over the elements about to be consecrated the priest would signify the transfer of the sins of the people to the holy person of Christ. A similar ceremony took place when the innocent lamb was about to be sacrificed in the Old Law. Even that victim was a figure of the Lamb of God which was to be immolated in an infinite atonement.

The whole Canon of the Mass, with the exception of the Pater Noster and a few other brief words, is said in a subdued voice to indicate that the people should be in deep recollection. Three pertinent prayers precede the consecration. The first prayer of the Canon is for the *universal Church*, and Almighty God is asked to guide her throughout the world and to particularly bless the Pope and the local Bishop. In the second prayer the Almighty is implored to grant the in-

tentions of all those who have engaged the Mass as well as the intentions of all those who are present at it. His blessing is implored on them, their families, and their friends. In the third prayer of the Canon, God's protection is implored in the name of His Saints, among whom are mentioned by name the Blessed Virgin, the twelve Apostles, and twelve martyrs.

These three prayers precede the spreading of the priest's hands over the oblation. Then Almighty God is asked to bless, to consecrate, to approve of the oblation, to perfect it and to render it pleasing to Himself, and to convert it into the body and blood of His most Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(3)

Now the priest goes through a ceremony identical with that observed by Jesus Himself at the Last Supper when He performed the first miracle of transubstantiation. The priest uses Christ's identical words. As soon as he pronounces the words "For this is My body," the priest genuflects to adore the Sacred Host. Then he elevates it in order that the people may adore it. When he places it on the corporal he himself adores it again. Then comes the consecration of the wine in the same way, upon the utterance of the very words used by Jesus. The Precious Blood is now adored in the Chalice by the priest, and then elevated so that the people may adore it, and then again adored by the priest as he places the Chalice on the corporal. The altar boy rings the bell at each genuflection and at each elevation to call the attention of the congregation to the solemn moment, in order that all may adore the consecrated elements in union with the priest.

[Read what follows to the people.]

Commenting on the consecration of the Mass St. Ambrose says:

"For everything else that is said, gives praise to God. Prayer goes before on behalf of the people, on behalf of kings, and others; but, as the moment has arrived for the

venerable Sacrament to be accomplished, the Priest uses now not his own words, but the words of Christ. Therefore, it is by the words of Christ that this Sacrament is accomplished. What words of Christ? Words like those, by which all things were made. The Lord ordered, and heaven was made. The Lord ordered, and the earth was made. The Lord ordered, and the seas were made. The Lord ordered, and every work of creation was generated. See, therefore, how effective are the words of Christ. If, consequently, there is such power in the words of the Lord Jesus, that things sprang into existence which had not previously existed, how much more effective are they to change into something else that which already had existence? Heaven had not been, the sea had not been, the earth had not been. But hear Him as He speaks. He said, and they were made. He commanded and they were created. Therefore, in reply to you I am to say, it was not the Body of Christ before Consecration, but after Consecration, I affirm to you, that it now is the Body of Christ. He Himself has said it, and it has so been done: He Himself has commanded and it has so been created. But return with me to my proposition. It was, indeed, great, and deserving all veneration, that the Manna came down as rain from heaven to the Jews. But think which is the greater wonder, Manna from Heaven, or the Body of Christ? No doubt the Body of Christ, Who is the Creator of Heaven." (De Sacramentis, Lib. IV, 4).

St. Ambrose, who converted the great St. Augustine, lived in what Protestants call the Golden Age of the Church, before the close of the fourth century. His words make it clear that the Holy Eucharist both as a sacrifice and as a sacrament was universally believed and frequented. For more than another thousand years every one who called himself a Christian attended Mass and partook of Jesus' body and blood in Holy Communion. Its loss is the greatest privation of Protestants, the greatest evil which has befallen the world.

VI

- (1) The prayers following the Consecration. The Pater Noster.
- (2) The Mass prayers preparatory to Holy Communion.
- (3) The part of the Mass following Holy Communion; the prayers at the foot of the altar.

(1)

Just as three prayers precede the Consecration and the mystical sacrifice of the Victim, so three solemn prayers are said between the Consecration and the Pater Noster. In the first, Jesus Who is present on the altar, is offered to God with the petition that His oblation be received with favor. In the second prayer the angels in Heaven are besought to carry the Offering to God's altar on high. Reference is also made in this prayer to the consuming of the Victim by the devout worshippers of the congregation present. In the third prayer the dead are remembered, and first the souls of those for whom the Mass may be offered. The priest prays that they may enjoy "a place of refreshment, light and peace." Connected with this is a prayer that *we living sinners* may die in the Lord; that we may be admitted into the company of the holy Apostles and martyrs, fifteen of whom are mentioned by name. Blessing the consecrated Species, the priest acknowledges that it is through Jesus that all good things are bestowed on us.

The prayer which Christ Himself taught us to pray is now uttered loudly, and at a high Mass it is sung, up to the words inclusively "and lead us not into temptation." Then the altar boy closes the prayer with the words "But deliver us from evil," and it is the priest who answers "Amen." Taking up the closing words of the Lord's Prayer, the priest beseeches Almighty God to deliver us from all evils, past, present and to come, to grant us peace during this life. After the altar boy responds, the priest, making the sign of the cross three times with the sacred host over the Chalice, asks that the peace of the Lord may always be with the people.

Referring to the Holy Communion with which the Sacrifice is to be completed and in which he expects the people to

participate, while dropping a small portion of the host into the Chalice containing the Precious Blood, he asks that the commingling of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may avail us who receive it unto life everlasting.

The breaking of the Sacred Host is done in imitation of Christ Who broke the consecrated bread at the first Mass to distribute among the Apostles. The small particle is dropped into the Chalice to signify the unity of the Sacrifice. In the early Church the host was much larger, and it was broken up into many parts for the communion of the faithful. People also received from the Chalice. This practice was later abolished in the Latin Church, because of the danger of irreverence and of the spilling of the Precious Blood. It is still practiced among the Greeks who are in union with Rome, as well as by the large body of Schismatic Greeks. The number of frequent communicants among these is not large. The Church would not, of course, have abolished the practice *if it were necessary* for the people to receive under both forms. You are taught in your Catechism that, because the living Christ is received, He must be whole and entire under either species. His body must be where His blood is; His blood must be where His body is. The separate consecration symbolizes the death of Christ, which must be mystically renewed in the Mass.

Now the Lamb of God, slain and about to be received, is asked twice to show mercy and once to give us peace.

(2)

Then follow three prayers, which the priest offers with bowed head and with his hands folded and resting on the altar immediately before the consecrated elements. They are the priest's immediate preparation for Holy Communion. He asks that the most sacred body and blood of Jesus may deliver him from all his sins, and that he may thereafter never be separated from Christ. He implores that the partaking of the living body of Jesus may not lead to his condemnation, but rather to his greater security for salvation.

Then he makes a profound adoration of the Sacred Host

before taking it between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, while with his right hand he strikes his breast three times in acknowledgment of his unworthiness and using the words of the centurion, "Lord I am not worthy, etc." He receives the Sacred Host with the words "May the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting"; and after a brief act of interior adoration and contemplation, the priest asks what he shall render unto the Lord for all the things He has rendered unto him. While saying "I will take the Chalice of salvation," he lifts the Chalice to his lips, forming a cross as he does so, and proceeds as he is about to receive: "May the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting."

The prayers of the first and second ablution of the Chalice relate to the Holy Communion just received. While the priest was purifying the Chalice it was formerly the custom of the people to recite or sing some psalms of thanksgiving. At present only one verse of a psalm is read from the Missal, and it is called "The Communion."

(3)

After pronouncing the customary greeting at the center of the altar, the priest returns to the book and reads or sings Post-Communion prayers, which like the Secrets, conform to the Collects in number. The sentiments in the Post-Communion prayers practically always relate to the Holy Communion of which the priest and people partook.

The Canon of the Mass ends with the reception of Holy Communion, and the remaining portion of the Mass is not of its essence any more than the part preceding the Offertory. Just as the first part of the service was preparatory to the great Oblation, the part which follows Holy Communion refers back to the great mystery celebrated, in thanksgiving and prayers of petition.

Those who have been taught that the Sacrifice proper ends with Communion often feel, if they have sufficient reason, they may leave church after the "Domine, non sum dignus." As a matter of fact Holy Communion is not over

until the priest receives from the Chalice, and the Canon of the Mass does not end until that time—the time immediately preceding the distribution of Holy Communion to the people, or until the “first ablution.”

Because of the sacred union which Christ has effected with the priest and the people, now is the time for fervent prayer and for the acquittal of our obligation to honor Almighty God by impetration or fervent prayer.

At the center of the Altar, facing the people, the priest after greeting them the last time reminds them that the Mass is ended, though they are expected to remain for the blessing. Bowed before the altar the priest asks the Holy Trinity to accept the homage which he, all unworthy, has offered, and that it may be applied to his soul and to the souls of all for whom it has been offered. Then in the name of the Holy Trinity the priest blesses the people, and closes the service at the altar proper with what is known as the *Last Gospel*, which is taken from the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John, during which the people are reminded of the great central mystery of faith, that of the Incarnation, which is renewed daily at the altar.

The prayers which the priest says kneeling at the foot of the altar after a low Mass were made a part of it by Leo XIII, and they may be omitted only when another function, such as Benediction or devotions, are immediately to follow.

Non-Catholics who do not understand the Mass, wonder whether it is not a purely mechanical action on the part of the priest, and whether participation on the part of the people is not also mechanical. They are not always wrong in their impression that too many of the people assist at the Mass mechanically; but there is not now, and there never was from the dawn of creation, a religious service covering a period of a half hour so solemn, so full of meaning, so powerful to appease and to win mercy and help from God, and so profitable to its participants. We are not surprised that Cardinal Newman, after applying his great mind to the Mass, declared that he could attend Mass forever and not

become tired. We are not surprised that great Protestant minds, which have given the Mass impartial study, are led to speak of it as does Augustine Birrell, who calls it "a tremendous mystery, so profoundly attractive, so intimately associated with the keystone of the Christian faith, so vouched for by the testimony of saints."

During that brief interval the tragedy of Calvary is renewed. The Heavens open, the Son of God descends from Heaven to the altar, immolates Himself anew, and gives His glorified body and blood to His loyal followers for a union which guarantees life everlasting to them.

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VII

- (1) Why a sermon on the Mass on Good Friday?
- (2) The whole life of Christ is renewed in the Mass.
- (3) The benefits of the great Sacrifice call for frequent and devout attendance at Mass.

(1)

We have seen that this Eucharistic Oblation, and it alone of all forms of worship, honors Almighty God infinitely, and therefore adequately from every point of view. We have seen that because of its infinite merits it more than offsets the tremendous accumulation of evil in this world upon which the God of infinite sanctity must look down from Heaven. We have seen that, because of the power of the Mass, we are enabled through it to pay each and all of the obligations which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator, our Heavenly Father, our kindest Benefactor.

(2)

The whole life of Christ is renewed in the Mass. He becomes Incarnate again as He did when He decided to assume our human nature the first time. St. John Damascene says: "If I am asked how bread is changed into the body of Christ, I answer: the Holy Ghost overshadows the priest and operates the same in the elements which He effected in the womb of the Virgin Mary." His birth at

Bethlehem which signifies the "house of bread" is renewed in the Mass. Pope Leo I says: "Every day we may be present at the happy birth of the Savior."

Before the priest vests for Mass he says a prayer composed of Pope Gregory XV, which begins with the words: "I wish to celebrate Mass and to call into being the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ," which means that he would produce Christ's presence sacramentally on the altar, so that it may truly be said: every day "there is born to us a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord." He is wrapped in the swaddling clothes of bread and wine and laid in the tabernacle of the priest's bosom.

The whole life of Christ is reproduced in the Mass. From the day He was born until the day He expired on the cross, He was a Victim of Sacrifice. Let me read to you what a theologian wrote three centuries ago:

"It may be said that our Lord put on the sacerdotal vestments when, hidden from sight in His Mother's womb, He took our flesh and assumed the garb of our mortality. Issuing thence, on the night of the Nativity, as from the sacristy, He began, on His entrance into the world, the Introit which is the commencement of the Mass. The cries He uttered in the Crib were the Kyrie Eleison. The Gloria was sung by the Angels who appeared to the shepherds, and accompanied them to the stable at Bethlehem. The Collects represent the petitions He offered when He spent the night in prayer, imploring for us the mercy of God. The Epistle represents the instructions He gave Moses and the Prophets, showing how they were fulfilled in Himself. He read the Gospel when He traversed the country of Judea proclaiming His divine doctrine. The Offertory was when He daily made an oblation of Himself to God the Father for the redemption of mankind as a propitiatory Victim. The Preface represents His daily tribute of praise to God the Father, His thanksgiving for the benefits conferred upon man. The Sanctus was sung by the Hebrew people on Palm Sunday, when they cried: 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Hosanna in the highest!' The Consecration took place at the Last Supper, when He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. The Elevation was when He was lifted upon the cross, and made a spectacle to angles and to men. The Pater Noster represents the seven words He uttered on the cross. The breaking of the Host the separation of His sacred Soul and Body. The Agnus Dei was spoken by the centurion and those who were with him, when, smiting their breasts, they said: 'Indeed this was the Son of God!' (Matt. XXVII, 54). The Communion represents the anointing of our Lord's Body and the laying of It in the tomb. The Blessing at the end of Mass represents the benediction He gave to His disciples when about to ascend into Heaven."

When Christ was not occupied with active work, He was communing with His Heavenly Father in prayer, the prayer of intercession. Present on the altar He prays for the world and offers to Heaven the petitions of those who are present at the Sacrifice; and more particularly does He pray for those for whom the Mass is offered. He prays, mystically slain, and with the exposure of His glorified wounds.

His passion is renewed in the Mass. The Council of Trent says: "In this Divine Sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass the same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner Who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the Altar of the Cross." In fact the Mass is no other sacrifice than that which was offered on the cross, having the very same Priest and the very same Victim. Christ would have been willing to hang on the Cross until the end of time in order that the blood which flowed from His wounds, in order that His sufferings and prayers might be applied to every human being who would live until the end of time. Instead He decided to have the Sacrifice renewed every day in thousands of places.

If you ask, despite the several instructions you have had, how it can be contended that the death of Christ is renewed in the Mass, we answer with DeLugo: "Although by the Consecration Christ is not substantially destroyed, He is

nevertheless destroyed in so far as He takes upon Himself an inferior condition, a condition unsuited to the human uses of a human body, a condition in which He becomes capable of being received as food. This change is sufficient for a true sacrifice."

Christ's death ensued on the cross by the complete separation of His blood from His body. In the Mass His death is represented by the separate Consecration of the bread into His body and the wine into His blood. His body becomes present under the form of bread, His blood under the form of wine, so that each would appear to be distinct and apart from the other. It has been explained to you, however, that since Christ, Who now lives gloriously in Heaven, cannot actually die again, He must be whole and entire under each form.

When we assist at Mass we are witnesses of the mystical renewal of Christ's death; and when we offer it to Almighty God in atonement for our sins, or in thanksgiving for His goodness and love, or in adoration of His majesty, or in supplication for His favors, we are offering Him something the very equivalent to His death on Calvary.

(3)

Should it be necessary to bring pressure to bear on Catholics to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass frequently and to occupy themselves in the most intense manner during Mass? All during His life Christ's mind was occupied with the great sacrifice He was to offer. He referred to it as His "hour." He longed to offer His first holy Mass at the Last Supper and so told His Apostles. He longed for the cross and Calvary to which the Mass at the Last Supper was related. He longed to have done "in commemoration of Him" what would perpetuate His Immolation, so that He could be "a priest forever." When present at the Holy Sacrifice we become sharers in all the merits of His sufferings, His sorrows, His death. We enjoy the same opportunity for merit which Mary and John and Magdalene and the other holy women enjoyed as they stood beneath His cross. Just

as He received the petition of the penitent thief so He receives our petitions and offers them to the Heavenly Father, either for our forgiveness or for graces of which we stand in need. It is at the Mass especially that Christ places himself between His Heavenly Father and ourselves as Mediator.

In September, 1915, the late Pope Benedict XV instituted a "*League of Daily Mass*", which he hoped would be established in all parish churches, religious houses, colleges, schools, and public institutions. How many of you will resolve to attend Mass every morning, or at least one or two mornings during the week?

The best manner of profiting by the Mass is to offer it up in union with the priest, after forming one or several of your own intentions. Remember that it has an infinite application, and therefore any Mass can be offered both for the living and the dead, and not as some people imagine either for the living or the dead. If you follow the Ordinary of the Mass as it appears in your Prayer Book translated from the Missal, you will, of course, be reciting the very same prayers which the priest does at the altar.

But there are many ways of offering the Holy Sacrifice.

The method of St. Leonard, of Port Maurice, is highly recommended. Taking into account the fact that everyone of us owes four debts to the Almighty, namely, those of worship, of reparation, of thanksgiving, and of petition, it was his custom to divide the Mass into four parts and occupy his mind with sentiments corresponding respectively to these four debts. From the beginning of the Mass until the Gospel he would contemplate his relationship to his Creator, his own nothingness and the Creator's infinite goodness; his own unworthiness and his Creator's infinite sanctity; and from the depths of his nothingness praise and adore his God. From the Gospel to the Elevation he would examine his conscience, acknowledge his sinfulness and offer the Holy Sacrifice in atonement. From the Elevation to the Communion while Jesus was present on the altar he would recall the numberless benefits, both of a spiritual and temporal na-

ture, he had received from God, acknowledge the same, and offer the precious body and blood of Christ to the Heavenly Father in Thanksgiving. From the Communion to the end of Mass he would, taking advantage of his intimate union with Jesus, lay before the Lover of his soul, all his troubles and worries and needs, and then ask for Heavenly assistance.

The prayer which the people are urged to say before the crucifix after Holy Communion contains sentiments with which the people should be filled during Mass. Therefore it is most fitting that it be said before the close of the Mass even if the individual has not received Sacramentally. This reminds us of calling your attention to the great benefit of Spiritual Communion, which consists in an ardent wish that one could receive after having made an act of earnest Contrition. The spiritual union which such an act contracts with our Divine Savior, disposes one for a favorable hearing.

It would be well if you had in your homes a book which deals extensively with the Mass and read it, piece by piece, frequently, in order that you may be fully imbued with the greatness of the clean Oblation offered daily in your parish church and may be instigated to derive the greatest possible benefit from it.

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VIII

- (1) Christ's second Mass.
- (2) The Eucharist a pledge of our happy immortality.
- (3) Easter's lesson is life, not death.

(1)

Jesus not only instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice and offered the first Mass in Person on the eve of His death, but He offered it again on the day of His Resurrection. In the Gospel assigned to the Mass of tomorrow, we are told of Jesus appearing to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and how, without revealing His identity, He asked them what agitated their minds. They asked Him whether He was a stranger in Jerusalem, Who had not heard about the arrest, the trial, the brutal treatment which Jesus of Nazareth re-

ceived preceding a terrible crucifixion? They told Him that it was rumored that the Lord had risen from the dead, that this message was brought to Magdalene by an angel, that some of the Apostles had visited the tomb to verify the report, and that they found the tomb empty.

Thereupon Jesus took occasion to point out to them that they could have expected all this; that the prophets had foretold it; that "it was fitting that Jesus should suffer these things before entering His glory. Jesus was about to leave them, but the disciples pressed Him to remain with them a little longer as evening was approaching; they asked Him to stop and enter a little hut with them, which He did. Then continues Holy Scripture: "And it came to pass, while He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to them." He did the very thing which He did at the Last Supper, viz., He offered up His unbloody Sacrifice, and gave them Holy Communion.

These disciples did not know that it was Jesus Who was their guest until He celebrated this second Mass. They hurried to Jerusalem to report to the Apostles that Jesus was risen, for "they knew Him in the breaking of bread."

It is in the Sacrifice of the "breaking of bread" that Catholics know Jesus best. They know that He is "Jesus Christ yesterday, today, and the same forever." They know that He not only loves the human race as such, but loves every individual to such an extent that He would be their "bread of life." They know that the privilege enjoyed by the disciples at Emmaus may be enjoyed by them every day of the year.

It is the Easter body of Jesus, the glorified body, the spiritualized body, which forty days later returned to Heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, which is offered as the food of their souls, and therefore Catholics who attend Mass daily and receive Holy Communion daily enjoy a perpetual Easter.

(2)

When our Lord promised to leave with His Church His sacred body and blood as food for souls, He declared: "He

that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Could anything be more closely related to our own resurrection, of which we are reminded on this day, than the Eucharistic union with our Savior? Its worthy reception is, according to the words of Jesus Himself, a pledge or guarantee of the future glorious resurrection of our bodies and of their admission into the eternal glory of Heaven.

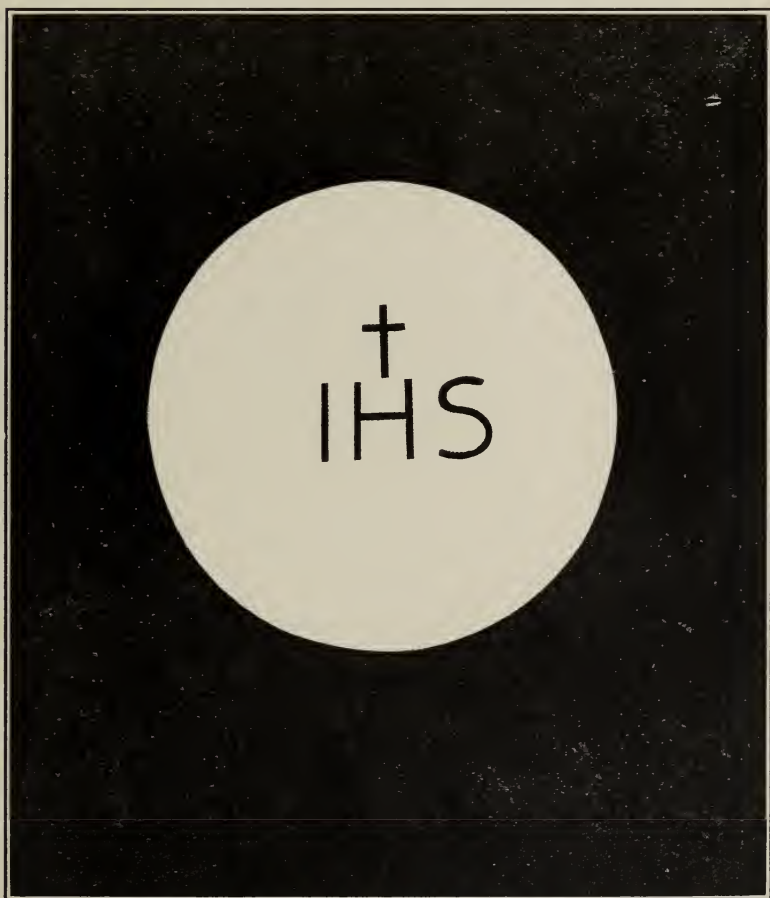
The belief concerning the Eucharist in the early Church, and its relation to our bodily immortality, is beautifully expressed in the writings of St. Irenaeus, the martyr, who tells us he was converted by the disciples of those who had seen the Lord.

"As the wood of the vine, placed in the earth, fructifies; and as the grain of wheat, sinking into the soil, is there decomposed and rises multifold by the Spirit of God, Who containeth all things; and as thereafter these (the grapes and wheat) are by Wisdom brought into the use of man (i. e., made into bread and wine), and perceiving the word of God, become the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ:—so also our bodies, nourished by this (Divine food), and laid away in the earth, and there dissolved, shall rise again in their time in the resurrection that is given them by the Word of God in the glory of God the Father, Who clothes this mortal with immortality and indues this corruptible with incorruption" (V. II, 3).

Therefore if we would rise from a grave of sin to a life in union with God here; if we would have our corruptible body put on incorruptibility; our mortal frame put on glorious immortality; if we would gain a victory over the grave and rise from it on the last day, as Christ rose from it on the third day after His death, all we must do is to have the fruits of Christ's Redemption and of His victory applied to us by the frequent attendance at Mass and the frequent reception of Holy Communion.

For many years after the establishment of the Church it was impossible for all the people to do what it is in your power to do today, namely, to attend the temple so easily and

to assist at the Holy Sacrifice unmolested, where the body of Jesus is broken and distributed in Holy Communion. Not all the Christians of the first two centuries enjoyed these privileges, because during the age of persecutions it was impossible to erect churches throughout the Roman Empire; but in the Acts of the Apostles we read how the first converts in Palestine and Asia Minor "continued daily with one accord in the temple, and broke bread from house to house."



(3)

The lesson of the Resurrection is life, and not death. From it springs all Christian hope; on the truth of it all the claims of Christ have their support; our own resurrection will be conditioned on our living the supernatural life, whose purchase power was the Sacrifice of Calvary, whose distribution power is the Sacrifice of the Mass, and whose principle nourishment is Holy Communion. The Apostles must have preached this more emphatically than anything else, because it seemed to be the one thing for which the early Christians risked all, the one reason for which they built the miles of catacombs under the city of Rome. They could have been Christians secretly in their own homes by prayer, and outwardly by works of charity, but they could not attend Mass, they could not receive Holy Communion unless it were done secretly, because they must always do it under penalty of death.

We can visualize Mary's contentment here on earth for eleven years after Jesus was taken from her only by representing her attending the Eucharistic Sacrifice every day, and receiving her divine Son from the hands of St. John, to whom she was committed as a Mother.

You could not show greater appreciation for the love of Jesus for you in His passion and death, you could not do more for your own sanctification, nor for the furtherance of the interests of Jesus on earth, than to attend Mass when it is not of obligation whether once, or twice, or three times a week, or daily, according as you will be able to do so. Then you will be sure to live the risen life, and to pass from death to life in all its fullness and glory, to be possessed without end. That such may be the character of your life here, and of your fate hereafter, is my wish and Easter prayer in your behalf.



