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The Mass...
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The Mass

PRESENTED TO
NON-CATHOLICS

REV. JOHN P. MCGUIRE



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THE MASS
PRESENTED TO
NON-CATHOLICS

A Brief Study of the Mass
for Those Who Accept
the Teachings of the Bible

REV. JOHN P. McGUIRE



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THE MASS PRESENTED TO NON-CATHOLICS

In our country, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews mingle freely in everyday life. They see much of one another in the business world; often, too, they are socially on terms of the most intimate friendship. With them, however, religion is often something to be avoided as a topic of conversation, although sometimes it is, unfortunately, a subject of heated discussion. For the most part, however, if we allow for certain notable exceptions, a commendable spirit of tolerance may now be said to prevail generally.

In addition, a measure of mutual understanding has been perhaps achieved in recent years by the adoption here and there throughout the country of certain forums. On such occasions priest, minister, and rabbi have met on a common platform to enter discussion designed to promote good will among the members of their respective creeds. But the existence of such interreligion discussion groups has not implied in any sense belief that one religion is as good as another, or even that one religion is good for one although not for another. For truth is after all objective. And since essential doctrines of great religions contradict one another, only one of these religions can be true.

It is not our intention here, however, to offer proofs for the truth of the Catholic religion, but rather to introduce the average non-Catholic reader to the study of the official act of worship of the Catholic Church—the Mass. For since so many regard the Mass as the supreme act of Christian worship, it would seem probable that it possesses some interest for all Christians, whether Catholic or non-Catholic. Accordingly, this explanation of the Mass is intended for the latter rather than for professed member of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps, therefore, it would be well to state at the outset that much of what the non-Catholic has learned about the Mass may be untrue. For it may have been obtained from unreliable or biased sources. Those unfriendly to the Catholic Church may have en-

deavored to convey to him an unfavorable impression of her worship. In such an event (and cases of this kind are by no means rare) the non-Catholic will need to be especially on guard against prejudice — that common though terrible obstacle to right thinking and acting.

But perhaps he has been sufficiently broad-minded to attend Mass himself occasionally — even though only because of social reasons. A Catholic friend, let us say, has passed away and he has gone to the funeral Mass. Or, someone he knew in business got married in a Catholic church and he attended the nuptial Mass. Or, again, he simply accompanied a Catholic friend to Mass on Sunday.

On such occasions, however, his impressions of the Mass could have been at best but superficial. He had observed how everyone appeared to be quite reverent during the service. He had, indeed, perhaps commented on the fact afterward. But the whole service — with the exception, of course, of the sermon — had been in Latin. And this, he did not like. For he did not know Latin. Then, too, the robes of the priest appeared quite strange to him.

These and other externals of the Mass had indeed easily come within the range of his observation. He probably would have, however, no way of knowing that the service he had just attended was actually a real *sacrifice*, and that it was furthermore a *renewal of Christ's death on the cross*.

To the non-Catholic this will seem, indeed, strange. Perhaps he will think it impossible. Yet we shall presently show that this is nevertheless quite true. Let us, therefore, begin by discussing the subject of "sacrifice." For we must first of all have a clear idea of what sacrifice considered as an act of worship really is.

PART ONE

CONCEPT OF THE MASS

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifice is a common word. Everyone knows something of its meaning. In time of war all must sacrifice pleasures, money, even life for victory over the common foe. We often speak of the sacrifices which parents make for their children or which athletes and scholars make to attain their goals.

This is using "sacrifice" in the broad sense of giving up some desirable thing for a more important object. Father and mother would like to take a vacation but education for John or Mary is more important and so they stay at home. By this sacrifice they demonstrate in a concrete and visible way their parental love and devotion as well as their sense of duty and responsibility.

But let us see what "sacrifice" means in a more restricted sense, particularly as it applies to religion. We all have met "sacrifice" in this connection because the Old Testament makes countless references to it, for example, "Let us go and sacrifice to our God" (Exod. 5:8), "To adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Kings 1:3).

As used in these quotations and elsewhere throughout the Bible, sacrifice means to "make sacred" and is an offering to God of something visible — perceptible to the senses — to recognize God's absolute supremacy and to acknowledge man's complete dependence upon Him. Furthermore, sacrifice here expresses in a visible way the homage and veneration owing to God. The offering is made by destroying the physical object or bringing about some change in it equivalent to destruction. In the Old Testament sacrifice was had by slaying a lamb or some other animal or by offering the first fruits of the field and by other ways.

Such an act of worship is *natural* to man. He tends to express in a concrete and visible fashion his thoughts and desires. If he cares a great deal for someone, he shows it by giving that person gifts.

Christmas presents are expressions of love just as gifts to heroes and great leaders are tokens of a nation's gratitude and respect. A true American does not stop at saying "I love my country." He makes sacrifices of time and self for her security and welfare. Parental love cannot be limited to words; parents, simply because they are parents, must express their love and devotion in concrete and visible acts. Likewise, man cannot limit his *religion* to thoughts or words: he necessarily must show it in visible acts of worship, namely, by offering sacrifice.

True, the visible act of worshipping God is of no great importance *in itself*. But if both the outward and inward elements are not present, the act of worship is incomplete. Man is composed of a body as well as a soul, and his entire self should take part in an act of adoration of his Creator.

That sacrifice is natural to man is also evident from its universality. No race, no people, no land, no time has been without this act of worship. Pagan Egypt, Rome, and Greece had daily sacrifices to appease the gods and to petition their blessings. Today's savages in South Africa and interior Australia acknowledge Somebody's supremacy and their own complete dependence by sacrificing animals or objects of value. The universality of sacrifice indicates that man tends to express his feelings toward God in an outward way, namely, by offering gifts to Him — by sacrifice.

Not only is sacrifice natural to man but it is commanded of him by God. Speaking to Moses, God said, "When thou shalt have brought my people out of Egypt, thou shalt offer sacrifice to God upon the mountain" (Exod. 3:12). Moreover, in the Book of Leviticus, God laid down with remarkable detail the manner and method of sacrifice. In the holy temple of Jerusalem whose erection God had commanded and guided, sacrifice was offered daily.

Finally, as we shall see, God willed that His own Son should offer Himself a bloody sacrifice on the cross. St. Paul tells us, "Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). GOD FURTHERMORE WILLED AND INDEED COMMANDED THAT THIS SACRIFICE BE CONTINUED IN AN UNBLOODY MANNER UPON THE EARTH THROUGH A MEANS KNOWN AS THE MASS.

For the present, however, let us bear in mind what is generally considered characteristic of sacrifice. As an act of worship it is

offered for a number of different reasons, such as, to atone for sin, to thank God for blessings, and to ask favors of Him. The priest, who represents the people, acts in a sense between God and man, and is therefore known as a *mediator*. The object sacrificed also symbolizes the offering of the people's lives to God. Sometimes, too, there is a *sacrificial meal*, which is a token of man having obtained God's friendship. Finally we should keep in mind that a sacrifice is a *public act*.

2. God Wills a Particular Sacrifice

The pages of the Old Testament not only tell of the sacrifices commanded and prescribed by God but they foretell a particular sacrifice which God willed from all eternity. The sacrifices offered by the Jews were types and figures of the coming great sacrifice which would be offered on Calvary and which, as the Mass, would be daily renewed throughout the world until the end of time. In this connection certain sacrifices of the Old Testament are especially significant. And just what are these?

In the early history of mankind Cain and Abel offered sacrifice. "And it came to pass after many days, that Cain offered of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat; and the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings. But to Cain and his offerings he had no respect" (Gen. 4:3-5). Here God made it evident that not all sacrifice is pleasing to Him. The offering of Abel prefigured a coming sacrifice which would be pleasing to God because He who would offer it would be holy. God did not look with favor on the sacrifice of Cain because of his lack of proper interior disposition.

Later in the history of man, we read of Melchisedech, king and priest, offering sacrifice. "Melchisedech, the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was priest of the most high God, blessed him, and said: Blessed be Abram (Abraham) by the most high God who created heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:18-19). As St. Paul tells the Hebrews in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to them, Melchisedech foreshadows Christ. The offering of bread and wine made by Melchisedech would one day be a daily occurrence throughout the entire world.

Abraham whom Melchisedech had blessed in offering bread and wine was to be the father of the Jewish race. "Look up to heaven

and number the stars if thou canst. So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5). Christ, so far as His human nature was concerned, would be of this "seed." In the sacrifice of Abraham as related in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, we have a forecast of the complete sacrifice later to be offered on Calvary.

At the command of God, Abraham took Isaac, his son, up to the mountains to sacrifice him to the Lord, but an angel of God stayed his hand and the Lord declared Himself pleased with Abraham's obedience and accepted a different sacrifice.

Finally, in the Book of Exodus, a sacrifice was offered which, together with its circumstances, pointed in a most particular and special way to the coming supreme sacrifice.

When the Israelites¹ were freed from slavery in Egypt, there was a sign of *a great event that was to occur centuries later*. In each Jewish family a lamb was to be slain and its blood sprinkled upon the doorpost. That night the hand of God *passed over* each Israelite home. But it struck down the first-born son in each Egyptian family, for the blood of the lamb had not been sprinkled there.

This never-to-be-forgotten event in Jewish history was always to be celebrated. Death had passed over Israelite homes. To commemorate this, the "Passover" or Paschal feast was instituted at the command of God. Annually at this festal occasion on a given day, each family was to partake of the flesh of a lamb, of unleavened bread, and of wine. And there was to be a hymn and prayer, for *it was a religious festival*.

After his people were at last freed from slavery, Moses gave them the famous law received from God. In doing so he sprinkled them with the blood of sacrifice and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exod. 24:8). According to the manner prescribed in detail by the Mosaic law, many sacrifices were offered by the Jews both at the Tabernacle and in the great Temple of Jerusalem. But these sacrifices, though for a while pleasing to God, were imperfect and insufficient to salvation. They were to be replaced and superseded by the sacrifice of the Cross which would be perpetuated by the Sacrifice of the Mass.

In the "fulness of time" Jesus came upon earth. He, the Messiah,

¹ Strictly speaking, not all of Abraham's descendants were God's chosen people. But his grandson, Jacob, and his descendants, known as "Israelites," were.

had the nature of man and the nature of God—united in one person. During His lifetime He spent Himself in the interest of His heavenly Father. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.” And, as we shall see, His death was in a strict sense a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Let us now, therefore, carefully consider events as they transpired at the end of Jesus’ life on earth.² Knowing that the time of His death was near at hand, He exclaims to His Apostles, “I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you” (Luke 22:15). But His last supper was to be much more than an ordinary passover feast. It was to mark the beginning of a new covenant and the end of the old. This new covenant was to be not with the Jews only but with all mankind. St. Matthew writes: “And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave it to his disciples, and said, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ And taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, ‘All of you drink of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins’” (Matt. 26:26–28).

In view of these words it is apparent that the “Last Supper” was closely fused with “Calvary!” St. Paul tells us what happened on Calvary: “Christ also loved us, and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor” (Eph. 5:2). In another letter he writes: “For if the blood of goats . . . sanctify the unclean unto the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered himself unblemished unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:13–14.) The same Apostle refers to the Saviour as a *mediator* and a *high priest*³ of the new covenant⁴ according to the order of Melchisedech⁵—the royal priest who offered bread and wine.

St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, introduced Christ: “Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Isaias had prophesied of Him: “And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity: if he shall lay down his life

² Later, the life of Jesus upon earth in a different form will be explained.

³ Heb. 5:10; 9:15.

⁴ Heb. 9:15.

⁵ Heb. Ch. 7.

for sin" (Isa. 53:10). The Saviour Himself said: "For them I sanctify myself" (John 17:19).

In view of such passages from Sacred Scripture, it seems hardly necessary to state that Christ was both priest and victim. Nor is there anything inherent in the office of priest to prevent one from being also victim. The priest may willingly offer himself as a victim. True, others put Christ to death; but He willed to die for mankind.

Thus occurred on Calvary a sacrifice—a perfect sacrifice. Its object was chiefly to atone for sin; but it was also to ask favors of God, return thanks to Him, and express love of Him. The Old Testament sacrifices had been but types of the "New"; they had been prophetic of it. They had conferred only an external kind of holiness; both priest and victim had been imperfect. But Jesus being both God and man was the perfect priest—the perfect mediator. As a victim too, He alone was worthy of God's acceptance—an external sign of which was the Resurrection of Christ from the dead and His Ascension into heaven.

Thus on Calvary mankind was represented by One who was sinless and perfect, Jesus Christ, even as man had once been represented in the Garden of Eden by Adam who had fallen by disobeying God. The obedience of Christ, the second Adam, atoned for the disobedience of the first and that of his posterity.⁶

* * *

But what precisely had taken place at the Last Supper? On Calvary Christ had really died. At the Last Supper He died mystically; that is, through a marvelous means He represented His death. Creative power had already achieved much for man. Redemptive love would now go further. The former had given the sunset its delicate hues and formed celestial bodies, fixing their course in space. The latter had, some years before, caused the Word⁷ to become flesh. Now it caused elements (bread and wine) to become the Word.

To explain, the Saviour had once promised to give His flesh to eat. He had even allowed followers objecting to the literal meaning of His words to leave Him. Now at the Last Supper He redeemed

⁶ Rom. 5:17.

⁷ The expression "Word" is sometimes used in Scripture for Christ.

His promise. His words, "This is My body," caused the substance⁸ (although not the appearances) of bread to become His body and blood.⁹ The *appearances* of bread which remained represented His *body only*. Similarly His words, "This is My blood," caused the substance (but not the appearances) of wine to become His body and blood. The appearances of wine which remained represented His *blood only*. In this way there was a marvelous representation of Christ's death. FOR HIS BODY WAS REPRESENTED IN A UNIQUE MANNER AS SEPARATED FROM HIS BLOOD. The act by which the change was made is called consecration. The separate consecration of the bread and its transubstantiation into the Body of Christ and the consecration of the wine and its transubstantiation into the Blood of Christ is essentially the Mass.

Early Christians, however, knew the Mass by other names, such as the "Lord's Supper," the "Eucharist," or the "Breaking of Bread." The name "Mass" was not used until many years later when the custom began for the deacon to dismiss the people formally from the service. His word were "Go, it is the dismissal." The phrase in Latin is *Ite, missa est*. And *Missa*, the Latin word for "dismissal," is in English "Mass."

The word "Mass" then is in itself of no special significance, but that for which it stands is of the utmost importance, for it is the same sacrifice as Calvary. On the cross, it is true, Christ really died—the Victim was destroyed. But in the Mass there is the moral equivalent of Christ's death; that is, the very nature of what is accomplished at Mass is such as to express in a special manner the Saviour's death.

Christ's death on the cross was, as we have seen, a sacrifice for all mankind. Identical with it in a certain sense, the Mass is also a sacrifice and offered for the same ends for which Christ's death on Calvary was offered. It is spoken of as a "continuation," a "renewal" of Christ's passion and death. To celebrate Mass is, as St. Paul tells us, to "proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies soon after the death of Christ, its Temple was also destroyed and the sacri-

⁸ Substance, as opposed to appearances, is that which makes a thing what it is.

⁹ See the Gospel of St. John, Chapter VI. Excellent pamphlets on the subject of the Real Presence are available from the Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind.

fices of the Jews ceased from that time. There began then the fulfillment of a prophecy contained in the Old Testament. God had declared Himself displeased with the sacrifices of the Jews, and foretold that oblations would be made Him by the Gentiles. They were to be worthy offerings, "clean," as the prophecy puts it. And they were to be made ceaselessly throughout the day, and in every part of the earth. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 1:11).

Truly, the Mass is the fulfillment of this prophecy for it is the official worship of a universal religion. Throughout the world somewhere at every hour of the day the renewal of Christ's passion and death is taking place by this means.

Yet how *can* Mass be celebrated today? True, Christ offered the first Mass at the Last Supper — there He changed bread and wine into His body and blood. But how can this be accomplished in our time? To answer this we must remember the Saviour's words: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Such was the command of our Lord to His Apostles, who were the only disciples with Him on this occasion. Clearly the Apostles must have received the power to do what He had done — change bread and wine into His body and blood, for Christ would not have commanded something impossible of fulfillment.

In other words, the Saviour ordained the Apostles priests. No ceremony, seemingly, took place as the priesthood of Christ was conferred upon them. The Saviour's words alone were sufficient. But when the Apostles selected other men upon whom to bestow the priestly power, they imposed hands on them and spoke words indicative of what was being granted. St. Paul writes of this imposition of hands (laying hands upon the heads) to his fellow missionary and bishop:¹⁰ "Do not lay hands hastily upon anyone" (1 Tim. 5:22). And he exhorts him: "Stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6).

The conferring of the priesthood upon anyone has always been regarded as the bestowal of the greatest honor. St. Paul writes:

¹⁰ A bishop possesses the fulness of the priesthood and can ordain others.

"No man takes the honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God . . ." (Heb. 5:4). Finally, the Christian priesthood is found only in the Catholic Church, where it has come down in a direct lineal manner from the Apostles and Christ Himself.

Thus, by instituting the priesthood Christ made it *possible* for the sacrifice of the Mass to be offered. But He did not say *how* it was to be celebrated. What should be the words of the Mass service? What was to be the action (ceremony) to symbolize that which was taking place? These were matters which were to be determined by various factors and only in the course of time.

Although there was little uniformity as to the mode of celebrating Mass among the Christians of the first three centuries—except, indeed, as to the essential rite of consecration, there was even then some similarity of outline. In fact, several of the phrases used were the same throughout Christendom. A definite period of crystallization followed. Prayers and ceremonies became identical in larger centers of Christianity. Rites, in other words, had come into existence. They corresponded with the centers of population in the early Church: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.

It is the last mentioned rite, the Roman, which will hereafter claim our attention. Mass offered in this rite is still in the Latin language, Latin having been retained even where it has not been the language of the people, for it is a "dead" language and unlike modern tongues is not subject to change, both as regards to form and meaning of words. We know that English has changed greatly in a few centuries. The famous poem, "Canterbury Tales," for example, cannot be intelligently read by one who has not some knowledge of the English of Chaucer's time. The use of Latin in the Mass preserves the original meaning of the texts of the Mass for succeeding generations.

Then, too, the Mass is celebrated everywhere in the world; so that Latin is the official language of a universal Church and there are obvious reasons of convenience in celebrating the Mass in the same language in the various parts of the world. Latin, moreover, is a very sonorous or musical tongue and is, therefore, well suited to the purpose when Mass is chanted.

3. *Many Things About the Mass Explained*

Before we begin to describe the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass of the Roman rite,¹¹ several things require explanation. When, for example, the priest who celebrates¹² Mass is assisted by two clergymen—a deacon and a subdeacon—and incense is used, the service is known as “Solemn Mass.” At such a service much of the text of the Mass is sung. Again, sometimes the Mass is sung but the celebrant is not assisted by other clergymen. In this case, it is often known as “High Mass.” But generally the priest simply reads the Mass, and then it is known as “Low Mass.”

An irremovable altar at which Mass is offered should be of stone. In certain great churches such an altar is supported by stone columns that rest on the earth. Within the altar are sealed relics of saints—several or at least two of which are of martyrs of the Church. The altar is solemnly consecrated by a bishop. It represents the Victim of the sacrifice of the Mass—Christ.

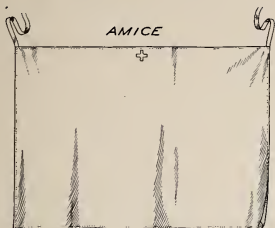
It is frequently difficult and indeed impossible to have such an altar for the celebration of the Mass. For the holy sacrifice takes place in the humble chapel as well as in the great cathedral. In place of the stone altar, there is usually a slab of stone, or, as it is usually called, an altar stone. It also is consecrated by the bishop and contains the relics of saints just as the fixed or stone altar does. Generally a framework of wood or of some other material is built about the altar stone. We commonly refer to the entire structure as the altar. Sometimes missionaries and military chaplains simply carry a small altar stone in a “Mass-kit” and place the stone on any suitable surface to say Mass. Chaplains often offer Mass close to the firing line in time of war, and even on the deck of warships.

Several things must be on the altar when Mass is celebrated. Three white linen cloths are spread over it. At least two lighted wax candles are placed on it. These are symbolic of Christian faith, but were once a necessity when Mass was celebrated in the darkness of the catacombs.^{12a} Above the altar there must be, as one might suppose, the “emblem” of Christ suffering, the crucifix.

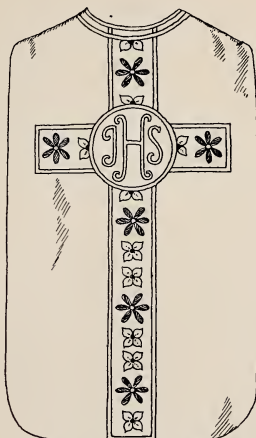
¹¹ Mass is offered today much more often in this rite than in any other.

¹² The priest who celebrates Mass is often referred to as the “celebrant.”

^{12a} Here we find, too, the origin of the relics of saints in the altar. For Mass in the catacombs was celebrated over the body of a martyr.



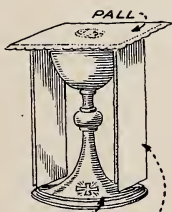
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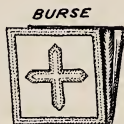
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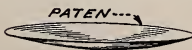
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A place also is arranged on many altars in which the Blessed Sacrament¹³ can be kept. This is a receptacle fixed to the altar. Called a "tabernacle," it is often plated with gold or silver and is always lined with silk. The Eucharist is kept in the tabernacle from one Mass to the next for many reasons; among them being the desire to show the continuity of the sacrifice and the need to have the Eucharist immediately ready for anyone in danger of death. Furthermore, the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle makes the church literally the house of God. This is the reason why Catholics show such reverence in church—they do not talk except when necessary, and why they bend a knee to the floor on entering and leaving the church, or passing before the altar—in this way they acknowledge Christ's sacramental presence. On the altar there is also the Mass-book or missal. The Roman missal is, of course, in Latin. Although the celebrant reads the Mass in Latin, those present at Mass can and should follow the service by means of a translation.

At the beginning of Mass a small square piece of linen is unfolded and placed on the altar. It is the cloth on which the bread and wine will be consecrated. And because on it bread and wine are changed into the *body* of the Lord, it is called a "corporal," from the Latin word *corpus*, meaning "body."

The wine to be consecrated is poured into a chalice, a cup sometimes of solid gold. Like the altar itself, it is consecrated by the bishop. The chalice is cleansed toward the end of Mass with a piece of linen cloth called a "purificator." The particle of unleavened bread that will be consecrated for the priest's Communion rests on the "paten," a plate of the same metal as the chalice, and like it is consecrated by the bishop. Smaller particles of unleavened bread are placed in a vessel known as a "ciborium" for the Communion of the people. These sacred vessels are not ordinarily to be touched by lay persons.

The vestments worn by the priest at Mass are of considerable interest. In design they are in a general way the same as those worn in the Graeco-Roman world in the time of Christ. The "stole," the long vestment worn about the neck and hanging

¹³ An expression for the consecrated bread or wine in which Christ is really present. "Eucharist" is another expression used. To "consecrate" means both to dedicate solemnly and to change bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord.

down in front, is perhaps the descendant of the court dress of the Roman judge. The "alb," or long white garment, according to some authors, is none other than the flowing Roman toga.

But the use of such garments in the service of the Church for so long a period has naturally caused them to assume a sacred character. And through the centuries innumerable saints, ministering at the altar, have worn them. Perhaps, then, it may be well to describe them in some detail, pointing out the symbolism they have acquired in the course of time.

The "cassock," or long black garment the priest wears, is not a Mass vestment. It is his clerical garb and because it covers his body from head to foot is a sign of his having given himself to God and the service of the Church. The "biretta," or square cap with ridges, is also worn outside the celebration of Mass.

As the priest "vests" for Mass he puts on first an "amice" (over the cassock). This is an oblong piece of white linen with strings attached for tying it into position. It is worn about the shoulders. Priests of some religious orders, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, wear it over the head as a hood as they come to the altar to celebrate Mass. It signifies the helmet of faith. The word "amice" is from the Latin meaning "outer garment." The priest next puts on the "alb," to which we have already referred. It is white as the name implies and signifies the virtue of purity.

The "maniple" is then attached to the left arm. This is a small narrow vestment. In early Roman days it was probably nothing more or less—as the name would suggest—than a handkerchief. It symbolizes good works. The next vestment is worn about the neck and down in front. It is quite long and narrow, and is called a "stole." It is a sign of authority and has come to symbolize immortality.

The last vestment to be put on is quite large. It reaches down over the alb some distance in front and back and is open¹⁴ at the sides. This is called a "chasuble," from the Latin meaning "little house." It originally served as a protection against the weather and has come to signify protection against the powers of evil.

The chasuble, stole, and maniple vary in color according to the Mass celebrated. At Easter they are, appropriately, white, for then

¹⁴ Earlier chasubles were not opened thus at the sides.

we fix our thoughts upon the glory of the risen Saviour. White is used also on all the feast days of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints who are not martyrs. The vestments are red at Pentecost because the Holy Ghost came in the form of tongues of fire. They are red also at other Masses of the Holy Ghost and at all Masses of martyrs. Purple is used in seasons of penance, Advent and Lent, and on days before many great holydays. On Sundays during the long period between Pentecost and Advent the vestments are green. At Requiem Masses the vestments are black.

The official music of the Church, when the Mass is sung, is *plainchant*. This is a type of music common in the Church from early times. Simple but very different from other kinds of music, it is not merely prayerful music but actually musical prayer. The Gregorian chant, the variety used in the Roman rite, is recognized by great authorities as surpassingly beautiful and expresses admirably the thought and sentiment of the Church in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Certain parts of the Mass may be sung in polyphony, provided such music is deemed suitable by the Church for divine worship.

PART TWO

THE MASS-LITURGY

1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF THE MASS-LITURGY¹

For the present let us define the Mass-liturgy simply as the prayers, acts, and ceremonies of the Mass. These are officially prescribed by the Church and must, therefore, be always carefully adhered to wherever Mass is celebrated.

The Mass-liturgy is not the result of any planning at some particular period in the history of the Church. Rather, it is the product of a long period of development. Thus there may be found in it comparatively recent *additions* such as the "Prayers at the Foot of the Altar" which occur at the beginning of Mass and the "Last Gospel" which comes at the end of Mass.

In other respects the text of the Mass has been *abbreviated*. The chants of the Introit, Offertory, and Communion, for instance, are now a single verse or two whereas they each once comprised a whole psalm. At the Offertory, however, because the procession which was once customary has been discontinued, certain prayers have been added since medieval times. On the other hand, the Canon or Consecration prayer, which is of considerable length and the most important part of the Mass, has remained the same for thirteen hundred years or more.

The complete text of the Mass is not the same each time the sacrifice is offered. Certain parts are not subject to change. These belong to the "Ordinary of the Mass" and are said each time the sacrifice is offered. Other parts belong to the "Proper of the Mass" and vary with the day, the season, or the occasion. The Church calendar determines the content of the "Proper." If the calendar records the feast day of some saint to be celebrated, the "Proper" will contain appropriate references to that saint. But if the calendar marks a season, for instance, Lent, Advent, or Easter, the mood of the season will be reflected in the "Proper."

¹The word "liturgy" means a public duty or work and is, therefore, very appropriately applied to the great official prayer of the Church, the Mass.

The Proper of the Mass or the changeable parts generally consist of the Introit, Collects, Epistle, Gradual, Sequence, Tract, Gospel, Offertorium, Preface, Secrets, Communion, and Postcommunions. These parts will be explained in the order in which they occur in the Mass as will also the other prayers which comprise the Ordinary of the Mass.

* * *

Finally there are two main divisions to the Mass. The reason for this is as follows. Sometime in the early days of Christianity, there developed a prayer service as a preparation for the Mass. In time it became known as the Liturgy or Mass of the Catechumens and became part of the Mass-liturgy. The Catechumens were those studying Christian doctrine who had not yet been admitted to the ranks of the Faithful by Baptism. They were permitted to be present at this prayer-service but not at the Mass proper, which has, therefore, become known as the Mass of the Faithful. The Liturgy of the Catechumens comprises that portion of the Mass up to the Offertory. The Mass of the Faithful, the actual Eucharistic sacrifice, includes all from the Offertory to the end of Mass.

These two parts of the Mass may be in turn divided in quite a different manner. The first part of the liturgy of the Catechumens, the prayers and hymns (under "hymns" the Kyrie and Gloria are included), express that which we give to God, and the second part, the biblical readings, express that which God gives to us. Likewise, in the first part of the Mass of the Faithful, which comprises the Offertory and Consecration and is sometimes known as the sacrifice-oblation,² there is expressed that which we give to God, namely ourselves. In the latter part, the Communion, which is sometimes known as the sacrifice-banquet, there is expressed that which we receive from God, namely Himself. We are now ready to look at the text of the Mass.

2. Liturgy of the Catechumens

The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar

Once the private preparation of the priest about to celebrate Mass, "the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar" are today part of the service itself and are said by both priest and people alike. They

² William Busch, *The Mass-Drama* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press).

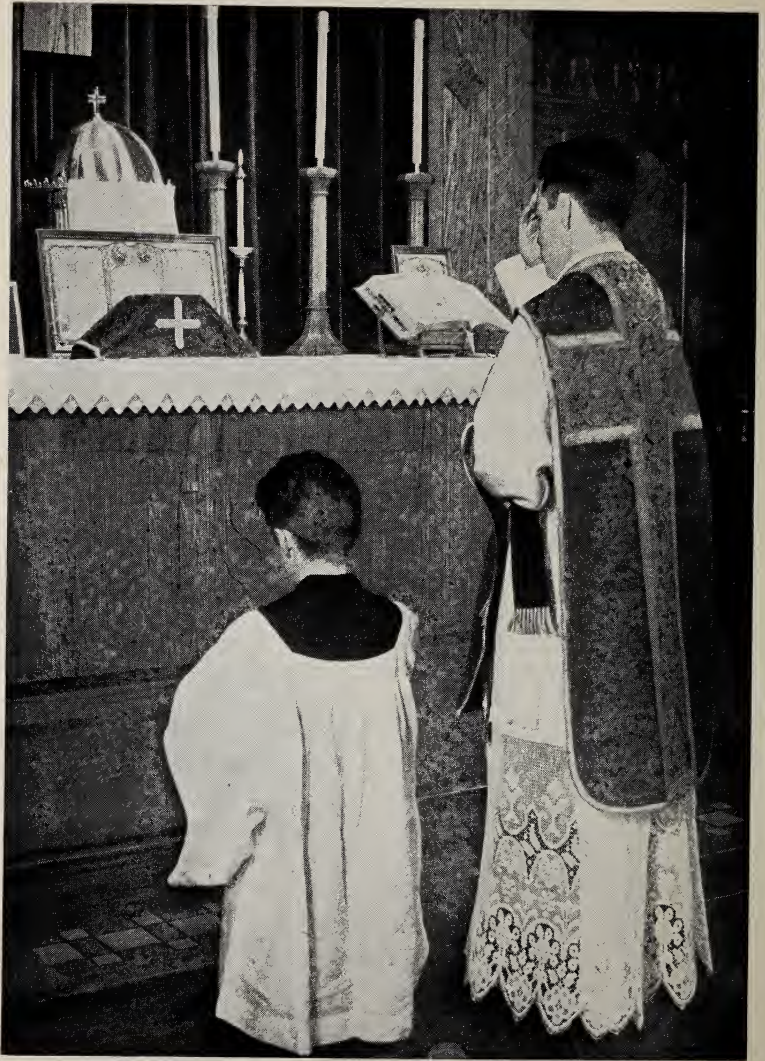
are recited at Low Mass after the priest has placed the chalice, covered by a veil, upon the center of the altar, and has opened the missal at the place from which he is to read. At Solemn Mass the chalice is in its proper place and the missal marked before the priest enters the sanctuary. As a *set preparation* for Mass these prayers are of comparatively recent origin, dating back only to the sixteenth century. But before that time these or other appropriate prayers, the selection of which was more or less left to the celebrating priest, were recited during an entrance chant.³ Sometimes they were even said by the priest while he was vesting in the sacristy.

The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar very fittingly begin with the Sign of the Cross, that well-known symbol by which Christians have for centuries professed their faith in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ as well as their belief in the existence of the other two Persons of the Trinity. There then follows an antiphon. "I will go unto the altar of God: unto God who giveth joy to my youth." The psalm which follows is the forty-second, one traditionally ascribed to King David. It expresses the longing of a Jew exiled from the Holy City to return in order to take part once again in its rich religious life. The thought of the psalm is adapted to the Christian about to participate in the sacrifice of the New Law. In the psalm are expressed feelings of joy, as well as ones of hope and confidence in God. The psalm (as is usual in the liturgy) closes with the well-known doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen." The above mentioned antiphon is then repeated.

Conscious of the virtue and even the holiness expected of one who celebrates Mass, yet mindful of his own unworthiness, the priest now continues to pray in the language of Sacred Scripture: "Our help is in the name of the Lord," and the people, through the server, answer: "Who made heaven and earth."

The most important part of the preparation of Mass follows in the recital of the *Confiteor*. In this prayer both priest and people publicly acknowledge their sins before God, and ask the intercession of His heavenly court. The prayer, as may be noticed from

³ See Introit, page 27.



The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar very fittingly begin with the Sign of the Cross.

the text, is primarily an expression of sorrow or contrition for sin. A few verses and responses in common use in the Church's liturgy conclude the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar.

The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar

Priest: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Priest: I will go up to the altar of God.

People: Unto God, who giveth joy to my youth.

Priest: Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy: deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.

People: For Thou art God my strength. Why hast Thou cast me off? And why do I go sorrowful while the enemy afflicteth me?

Priest: Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: they have conducted me, and brought me unto Thy holy hill, and into Thy tabernacles.

People: And I will go into the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth.

Priest: To Thee, O God, my God, I will give praise upon the harp. Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me?

People: Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God.

Priest: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

People: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Priest: I will go up to the altar of God.

People: To God who giveth joy to my youth.

Priest: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

People: Who made heaven and earth.

Priest: I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech blessed Mary ever virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, brethren, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

People: May almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting.

Priest: Amen.

People: I confess to almighty God, etc.⁴

⁴The same prayer is recited by the people as that said by the priest except that the word "father" is used in place of "brethren." The responses of the people in the Prayers at the foot of the Altar, as well as other parts of the Mass, are made by the server who represents the congregation.

Priest: May almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting.

People: Amen.

Priest: May the almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, absolution, and remission of your sins.

People: Amen.

Priest: Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life.

People: And Thy people shall rejoice in Thee.

Priest: Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy.

People: And grant us Thy salvation.

Priest: O Lord, hear my prayer.

People: And let my cry come unto Thee.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with thy spirit.

Priest: Let us pray.

Ascending the steps of the altar, the celebrant begins the recitation of two brief prayers: "Take away from us our sins, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that we may be worthy to enter with pure minds into the holy of holies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." And, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints, whose relics are here,⁵ and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen."

As the priest pronounces the phrase, "whose relics are here," he kisses the altar. He does this because the altar represents Christ Himself.

If it is a Solemn Mass incense is now used. Such was not the practice in the early Roman rite of the Mass. But it was only natural that so fitting a symbol of reverence and prayer as incense should in time have found its way into the liturgy of the Mass. In pre-Christian times incense was often used in religious rites, and as a mark of respect toward civil rulers. Among the Greeks and Romans there was a custom of bearing it in processions before great persons. One of the Magi brought a gift of frankincense to the Infant Saviour at Bethlehem. Frequent reference to incense is to be found in the Bible. The law of Moses prescribed that the Jewish high priest swing the censers in the Holy of Holies. The psalmist besought the Lord: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight." St. John, the beloved disciple, in a description of a heavenly vision, referred to the "golden vials full of odors" as the prayers of the saints.

⁵ See page 16 regarding relics in the altar.

The celebrant blesses the incense which he puts in the thurible, saying: "Be thou blessed by Him in whose honor thou shalt be burned." He then incenses the altar, after which the deacon incenses the celebrant. (Later on, at the Offertory of the Mass, not only the altar is incensed but the offerings of bread and wine as well.) After this incensing at Solemn Mass or immediately after kissing the altar at Low Mass, the priest reads the Introit.

The Introit

Although the Mass may not be said to begin with the "Introit," since the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar are now part of the service, the Introit is still the first of its variable parts and at a chanted Mass the choir may sing the Introit as the priest comes to the altar and it is then the opening part of the service. It is impossible to appreciate the significance of the Introit of the Mass, unless we consider the role it played in Masses of an earlier period. For it was at one time the solemn processional chant sung by the choir as the *celebrant entered the church*. In fact, the word itself means "he enters."

Formerly the Introit consisted of a whole psalm, an antiphon being repeated after each verse; but today it is generally only a single verse with an antiphon. In its earlier and longer form, as one might suppose, it served better the purpose of introducing the Mass and providing a *motif* for its variable parts.

The Introit is a more important part of the Mass than the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, for the latter are but preparatory in nature, having become a regular part of the liturgy only in comparatively recent times. The Introit is always read by the priest at the Epistle side of the altar. (When formerly the celebrant faced the people at Mass the right-hand side of the altar was to his right. Now he generally does not face the people at Mass but the old manner of speaking of the right and left side of the altar is retained.)

Introit for the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6)

Thy lightnings enlightened the world. The earth shook and trembled (Ps. 76:19). How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord (Ps. 83:2-3). Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As

it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Thy lightnings enlightened the world. The earth shook and trembled.⁶

The Kyrie

Having gone to the center of the altar, the priest recites the "Kyrie." *Kyrie eleison* are Greek words for "Lord have mercy" and together with the accompanying invocation "Christe eleison" (Christ have mercy) are almost the only Greek phrases now found in the Roman rite of the Mass. Since Greek was the language of the civilized world in apostolic times and once the language of the liturgy in Rome, it might seem that the Kyrie is but a relic of that early period. Some liturgists, indeed, believe it to be a fragment of an ancient Greek litany once recited in its entirety before the Mass. But a more probable explanation of its origin is to be found in the practice of the early Christians at Rome of holding "station" processions.

The "station" churches appeared at Rome soon after the Roman persecutions ceased. They were sometimes selected because they represented certain important shrines of Christianity in the Holy Land, as in the case of the Basilica of St. Mary Major which represented the place of Christ's birth in Bethlehem. Or, again, they were churches erected on sites hallowed by the martyrdom of some saint, such as the Basilica of St. Paul, which was built on the spot where the Apostle of the Gentiles was beheaded. On appropriate days of the year the pope celebrated Mass in these different station churches, large numbers of Christians repairing there for the service. As they marched to the church, they sang the simple refrain, *Kyrie eleison*, repeating the phrase over and over again.

But as time went on the custom of station procession began to disappear. The singing of the Kyrie, however, was not discontinued, but took place rather within the church and as part of the Mass.

At first the number of repetitions in the Kyrie was indefinite. But in the time of St. Gregory the Great (who added the phrase *Christe eleison*) the number became fixed at nine, a number which has remained constant to this day. At chanted Mass, *Kyrie eleison* is

⁶ For all variable parts of the Mass, the Proper for the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6) will be given.

sung three times to God the Father; *Christe eleison* is sung three times to God the Son; and *Kyrie eleison* is sung three times to God the Holy Ghost. At Solemn Mass the priest⁷ recites the Kyrie alternately with the ministers⁸ and at Low Mass with the server.

A prayer for mercy and forgiveness, the Kyrie lends a note of sadness to the Mass. For it is an appeal of suppliant creatures to an all-powerful God.

The Gloria

"Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among men of good will."

It is little wonder that the "Gloria," which the priest recites immediately after the Kyrie, is one of the best known and most loved of all Christian hymns. According to the Gospel its opening lines were sung by the angels on the first Christmas night to herald the birth of the new-born Saviour.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou only art holy. Thou only art the Lord. Thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high, together with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gloria is essentially a hymn of praise, dwelling more at length, however, on Christ than on the other two Persons of the Trinity. In it are found the four motives of prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and petition. The thought expressed in the introduction is the most important in the hymn—*glory* to God and *peace* to men who are united with Him by grace. And this is precisely what is achieved by the Mass, the continuation of the sacrifice of the Cross. The joyous, exuberant character of the hymn expresses triumph over sin rather than consciousness of it as in the case of the Kyrie. The Gloria contemplates the greatness and goodness of God Himself rather than man and his need of God's mercy.

⁷ Here as elsewhere in this book the word "priest" is used synonymously with the word "celebrant."

⁸ The deacon and subdeacon.



"Glory be to God in the highest and peace on earth among
men of good will."

At one time the Gloria had a place only in the Mass of Christmas, but today it occurs in all feast day Masses and those of Sundays, save during Advent and Lent, and on Saturdays when the Mass is celebrated in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Originally it was sung only at the Mass celebrated by a bishop,⁹ but it is today sung at the Mass celebrated by a priest as well. At all Masses, even at High Mass, when the choir sings the Gloria, the celebrant recites the entire text before the middle of the altar.

The Collect

Like the Introit, the "Collect" is a variable part of the service. It also bears a definite relation to the whole of the Proper of the Mass, for it suggests its *mood*. It is a typically Roman prayer, receiving the name "Collect" from the fact it was originally recited at Rome (by a bishop) when the Christians had assembled (or *collected*) at a certain church before forming a procession to the station church.

This prayer now appears in the Mass after the Gloria, or after the Kyrie if the Gloria is not said. It is read or sung by the celebrant at the Epistle side of the altar. That it is a *public prayer* and that the priest acts in the name of the people as Christ's special representative is apparent. He introduces the Collect by kissing the altar (which represents Christ) and extends the liturgical greeting *Dominus Vobiscum* ("The Lord be with you"¹⁰) to the people. He then prefaces the prayer with the word "Oremus" ("Let us pray"), and the people conclude the prayer with the response, "Amen."

The Collect normally consists of an invocation addressed to God the Father; a petition, containing the name of the saint if it is a Mass of a saint; and a conclusion referring to the mediatorship of Christ. For some time in the early Church, it was customary for the celebrant of the Mass to freely compose the Collect, the pope composing a special one each year.

⁹ Here, perhaps, it would be well to state that at a Pontifical High Mass the bishop remains at the throne for all of the Liturgy of the Catechumens except, of course, for the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. The fact that he is before the altar only for the Mass of the Faithful helps us to realize that the latter alone is the actual sacrifice.

¹⁰ This is a very ancient form of greeting. That used by a bishop, "Peace be to you," is, however, still older.

The literary style of the early collects is marked by brevity and simplicity indicating Roman origin in contrast to the florid and figurative language of the East. The collects are written in a special kind of rhythm known as *cursus*.

The position of the celebrant during the reading of the Collect is worthy of note, for it is the same as that used by the ancients at prayer. He stands erect—as he does during the other parts of the Mass—but with arms and hands extended. The famous picture in the Roman catacomb “Orantes” shows early Christians praying thus, and St. Paul advises Timothy: “I wish, then, that men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands” (1 Tim. 2:8).

Collect

Priest: The Lord be with you.

People: And with thy spirit.

Priest: Let us pray: God, who in the glorious Transfiguration of Thy only begotten Son hath strengthened the mysteries of faith through the testimony of the fathers, and who by Thy voice from the bright cloud hath wonderfully signified the perfect adoption of sons, establish us in Thy loving kindness, we beg Thee, as coheirs with Him, who is the King of glory, and in that very glory call us in the end to share. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, Thy Son who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth world without end.

People: Amen.

The Epistle

The reading of a number of passages or lessons from the Bible has ever been *the important part of the Liturgy of the Catechumens*. In very early Christian times, Jews who had been converted to the Church continued to attend synagogue services¹¹ before assisting at the Mass. These services consisted largely of the reading of selections or lessons from the Sacred Scriptures. Soon these Jewish Christians stopped attending regular synagogue services; yet the practice of reading portions of the Old Testament, in addition to selections from the New Testament, was continued at a special service which they attended, *in preparation for the Mass*. Thus began what was later to become known as the Liturgy of the Catechumens.

¹¹ It was probably customary to attend services in the synagogue during the day and to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice in the homes of the Christians in the evening.



The position of the celebrant as he reads the Collect is the same as that adopted by the ancients at prayer.

At first the number of lessons from Sacred Scripture, and even their length, was not determined. But as time went on the number became fixed at three. One was from a prophetic book of the Old Testament,¹² a second from an Epistle, and a third from a Gospel. The custom of reading three lessons from the Bible continued for some centuries. But finally the Old Testament reading began to disappear, and today there are generally only two biblical readings, one from an Epistle and one from a Gospel, although sometimes an Old Testament selection is read instead of a portion from an Epistle.

The "Epistle" reading always takes place at the right side of the altar.¹³ At Solemn Mass the Epistle is chanted by the subdeacon while the celebrant reads it; at an ordinary High Mass it is generally chanted by the celebrant but occasionally read by a special lector (reader). At Low Mass it is read only by the celebrant.

Epistle

Reading from the Epistle of blessed Peter, the Apostle (2 Pet. 1:16-19): For we were not following fictitious tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of His grandeur. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when from out the majestic glory a voice came down to Him, speaking thus: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And this voice we ourselves heard borne from heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy, surer still, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Response: Thanks be to God.

When the Epistle reading is over, the server says: *Deo gratias* (thanks be to God). This is in gratitude for the instruction received. These words, pronounced after the Epistle passage has been read, reminds us that a change has already taken place in the Liturgy of the Catechumens. In the first portion *we* were offering to God (our prayers). Now, *He* is offering to us (wisdom) by means of the inspired word. In the Greek rite of the Mass this change is very apparent, for the word "wisdom" is pronounced before the first biblical reading begins.

¹² Readings from the Bible and from books of lesser authority are known in the liturgy as "lessons" (Latin, *lectiones*). When at times in the Mass the first of the two lessons is from some part of the Bible other than an Epistle, it is usually, though inaccurately, called the Epistle of the Mass.

¹³ In more correct rubrical language, the left side. See page 27.

The Gradual

As in the Synagogue worship, a psalm was sung after a passage from the Bible had been read and before another followed; so, too, in the Church it was customary for the choir to sing a psalm after the first and second lesson of the Mass. When, however, the Old Testament lesson was no longer read at Mass, the psalm which had been sung after it was sung before the psalm occurring between the Epistle and Gospel lessons. But neither psalm was sung in its entirety, the former being reduced in the course of time to two verses and the latter to one.

Because the former psalm was originally sung by cantors on a step of the platform from which the scriptural lessons were read, it became known as the "Gradual" from the Latin *gradus*, meaning a "step." The same name is now applied to the two verses of the first psalm that still remain in the liturgy, the third verse¹⁴ being known as the *Alleluia* since it is preceded by two and followed by one Alleluia.

In certain Masses, for example, those of Lent, the *Alleluia* would be inappropriate and so it is replaced by the Tract. The latter is often made up of a number of verses of a psalm so chosen as to express the thought of penance. Sometimes the Sequence is sung in place of the Alleluia, usually at the important festivals of the year. The Sequence is a beautiful religious poem. During the Middle Ages, sequences were sung at many of the Masses throughout the year. But after the liturgical reforms of Pope Pius V in the sixteenth century, only five of these remained in the Missal, all of which are of unusual merit. The celebrant reads the Gradual and Alleluia (Tract or Sequence if they occur in the Mass) at the Epistle side of the altar, even when they are sung by the choir at High Mass.

Gradual

Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad on Thy lips. My heart hath uttered a good word. I speak my works to the King.

Alleluia, Alleluia. He is the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror, and the image of His goodness. Alleluia.

¹⁴ Representing the second psalm.

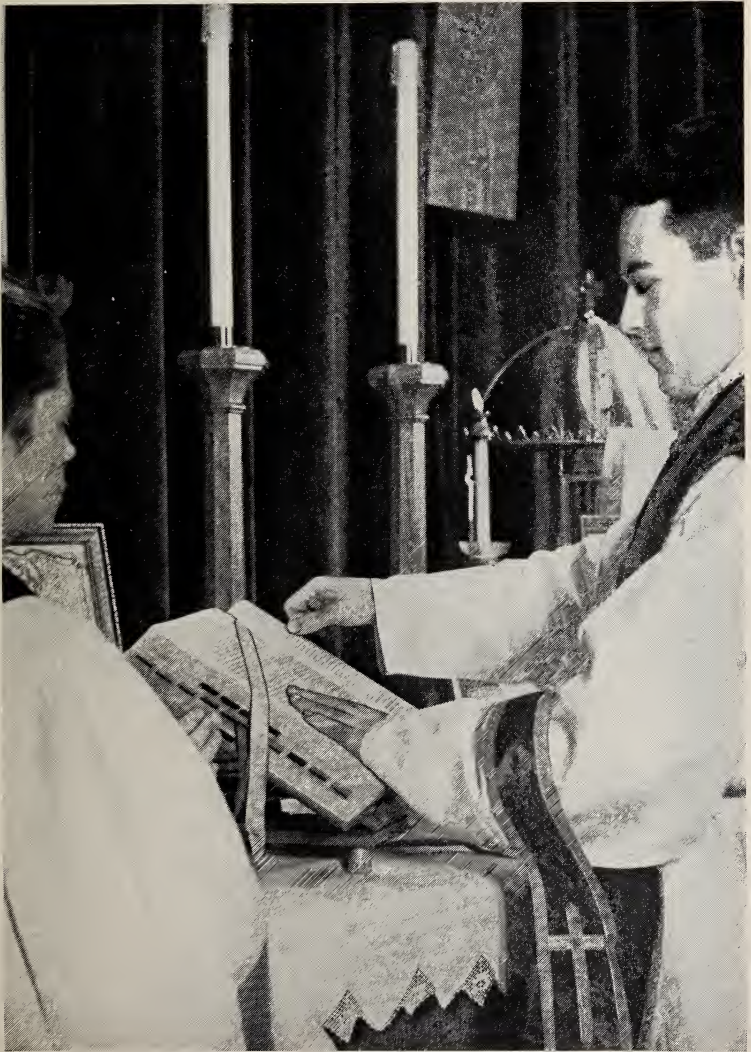
The Gospel

In the early Church the reading of the "Gospel"—the word means good tidings—brought the liturgy of the Catechumens to a close. After it the Catechumens were dismissed. The Gospel selection marked the climax of the service. The first scriptural lesson taken from the Old Testament contained instruction from one of the Prophets, the second, the Epistle, presented counsel from an Apostle, but the third, the Gospel, relating as it does the words and deeds of Christ, gave one a message from Christ Himself.

In the Middle Ages the Book of the Gospels was often very richly adorned. Before the age of print the manuscript was generally of the finest of vellum, its bindings being at times inlaid with precious stones. The reason for this embellishment was due to the fact that the book not only contained the inspired word, but being an account of the Saviour's life, was revered as a *symbol of Christ Himself*.

The Gospel book then was looked upon with great reverence, and the reading from it at Mass took place with much ceremony. At Solemn Mass a deacon read the appointed passage from a special pulpit. Before leaving the altar, he knelt to recite the prayer: "Cleanse my heart and my lips, O almighty God, who didst cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaias with a burning coal. Vouchsafe of Thy gracious mercy so to cleanse me that I may worthily announce Thy holy Gospel. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." Then, having received the celebrant's blessing he proceeded in company of the subdeacon and others bearing lights and incense to the pulpit. Arriving there, the deacon ascended alone and pronounced th *Dominus Vobiscum* (the Lord be with you) to indicate that an important part of the service was to begin. All in church stood. The lesson from the Gospel being read, the book was then kissed by everyone present.

The manner of reading the Gospel at Solemn Mass today is not greatly changed. The subdeacon, however, usually holds the book during the reading as very few churches have a special pulpit from which to read the Gospel. The book is today kissed only by the celebrant and by the bishop of the diocese if he is present in the sanctuary. The celebrant at all Masses reads the Gospel at the



The celebrant at all Masses reads the Gospel at the left side of the altar.

left side¹⁵ of the altar, pausing first at the center to recite the prayer: "Cleanse my heart, etc."

Gospel

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

Priest: The continuation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Response: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother, John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them. And his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking together with him. Then Peter addressed Jesus, saying: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us set up three tents here, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." As he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold, a voice out of the cloud said: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear him." And on hearing it the disciples fell on their faces and were exceedingly afraid. And Jesus came near and touched them, and said to them: "Arise, and do not be afraid." But lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus cautioned them, saying: "Tell the vision to no one, till the Son of man has risen from the dead."

Response: Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

The Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God of God, light of light, true God of true God. Begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made. Who for us men, and on account of our salvation, came down from heaven (*here all in church kneel*) and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary; and was made man. He was also crucified for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

¹⁵ Again this is the left hand side when the celebrant is facing the altar; this is usually known as the Gospel side.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism unto the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life in the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene Creed given above is sometimes recited at Mass. It is a very ancient and well known symbol of Christian belief, containing a *clear, explicit* statement of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Its history takes us back to the Council of Nice (325), from which it gets the name Nicene and at which Arius was condemned for denying the divinity of Christ.

The custom of reciting the "Creed" at Mass began in Rome, it would seem, only in the year 1015, but long before this time it had been used at Masses of Eastern rites. It was recited also in the early Roman ceremony of Baptism. Today the Creed is said on Sundays and certain feast days. The celebrant recites the Creed as he stands before the center of the altar. At a chanted Mass it is also sung by the choir. Occurring as it does at the end of the Liturgy of the Catechumens and before the beginning of the Mass of the Faithful, the Creed provides at the right moment an excellent opportunity for those in church to express *formally* their faith in the divinity of Christ before taking part in the sacred mysteries that follow.

3. *The Mass of the Faithful*

The Liturgy of the Catechumens being over, the Mass of the Faithful begins. The former is a prayer service in preparation for the latter, and probably had its early beginnings in the Temple or Synagogue worship, as we have already seen. The latter *is the real Eucharistic sacrifice*, for it re-enacts the Last Supper and renews the Sacrifice of the Cross.

There is an important reason for calling it the "Mass of the Faithful." In the early Church, because of cruel and relentless persecution, there was the *discipline of the secret*. The unbaptized or *uninitiated* were not told of the Christian teaching regarding the Eucharistic sacrifice, lest a distorted notion of it be conveyed to

those unfriendly to the faith.¹ For this reason the unbaptized were dismissed before the Mass of the Faithful began.

However, there was also a theological reason for excluding the Catechumens from participation in the Eucharistic rite. The Church has always taught that Baptism *unites one in a special manner with Jesus Christ*. Such is the Catholic teaching regarding the Mystical Body of Christ. It is often referred to in St. Paul's epistles, where the union that exists between the baptized and Christ is likened to that which exists between the various members of the human body and the head. The Saviour Himself made reference to it through the use of the metaphor: "I am the vine; you are the branches." Because of this union, the prayers of the Faithful living in the state of grace² are regarded by the heavenly Father as the prayers of His divine Son. Furthermore, through Baptism the Faithful are made to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ: "You are, however, a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). St. Augustine tells us: "He (Christ) is the head of the body whose members we are. From the head, the body learns to offer itself a sacrifice."

In a still more exalted fashion, the *bishops and priests of the Catholic Church as successors of the Apostles* participate in the priesthood of Christ. For the Apostles received at the Last Supper the power to change bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord when the Saviour commanded them: "Do this in remembrance of me"; and this power through the ages has been transmitted to the priests and bishops of the Church. In virtue of this special power the priest presides at the altar of the Eucharistic sacrifice, representing his master, Christ. The Faithful present at the service, although not possessing such power, are able, in virtue of *their participation in Christ's priesthood through Baptism, to offer the sacrifice with the priest*. The Catechumens being unbaptized did not as yet belong to the body of Christ nor share in His priesthood.

But what do both the priest and the people offer in the Mass? They may not offer their lives to God literally, but symbolically they may do so. And this very thing is accomplished by offering that which is necessary for human existence, namely, material food. From the earliest times man has acknowledged God's greatness

¹ Historically, we know that some pagan Romans did actually have very distorted notions about the Eucharist.

² That is, having no grave sins unforgiven and enjoying a share in divine life.

and dominion over him by offering such gifts. Abel sacrificed a lamb; Melchisedech, the royal priest and special prototype of the highpriest Jesus Christ, offered bread and wine; and the Mosaic law prescribed offerings of different animals.

The Offertory

In the Mass, then, the bread and wine offered are symbolic of the offerings of the lives of those present. And the manner in which bread and wine are produced is such that they are peculiarly suited to this purpose. Bread is made of flour ground from the wheat, for the growth of which *labor* of the fields is necessary. The wine also represents human industry and even suffering, being the product of grapes trodden in the wine-press. The bread and wine, then, may be said to represent *sacrificial death*.

The custom of bringing gifts to church for the sacrifice of the Mass continued on into the eleventh century. The kind of bread used in the Mass during that period was leavened, that is to say, ordinary bread baked in the homes of the Christians. It was fashioned into small round loaves, each of which was marked with a cross. Loaves of this kind, together with flagons of wine and other gifts as well, were brought to the church.

They were borne by the Faithful in the Offertory procession to a table near the altar. There they were received by the priest or bishop who celebrated Mass, the deacon assisting him in caring for the wine. Although all the gifts were placed on the table (the prothesis), the deacon selected only a portion required for the sacrifice. The remainder were used for the support of the clergy and the poor.

Upon the altar was placed a cloth, the "corporal" on which the deacon arranged the bread and wine selected for the sacrifice. The altar in very early times was constructed very simply, but essentially as it is today in the form of a table. At Mass the priest faced the congregation, standing on the opposite side of the altar from them. At a sign from the celebrant, the chant which accompanied the Offertory procession was brought to a conclusion. The priest recited what was then the sole offertory prayer in the Mass, namely the Secret, at the end of which the Preface, as now, introduced the great Eucharistic prayer commonly known as the Canon of the Mass.

A responsorial chant formerly accompanied the procession that took place at the Offertory, that is, two choirs took part in it. The first sang the antiphon, the second choir repeated it; the first then sang the first verse of a psalm, the second the antiphon, and so on until the whole psalm was completed or the celebrant gave a sign that a sufficient number of verses had been sung. But in the Middle Ages this chant became abbreviated, and in modern times only the antiphon of the psalm is usually sung. This antiphon is called the *Offertorium* in the Roman Missal. It is one of the variable parts of the Mass.

It is unfortunate that the Offertory procession has been practically discontinued in the Church. However, the significance of the procession survives somewhat in the liturgy today. For the bread and wine which the priest offers (and the Faithful co-offer) should be looked upon as the offering of their lives symbolically to God. Indeed, even the monetary contribution which the Faithful make during the Offertory represents the offering of themselves.

Today unleavened bread in wafer form, called a host, is used. The priest consecrates a large circular host for himself and as many small ones as are needed for the Faithful. The priest brings the large host to the altar on the paten and the small ones in the ciborium, a large cup-shaped vessel of precious metal. Before the Mass begins, the wine in cruets is set out on a small table at the Epistle (right) side of the altar. From here the altar boy or server brings the wine to the priest at the proper time during the Offertory.

* * *

But now let us turn to the text of the Mass as it is found at the present time in the Missal. At the end of the Creed, if it is said, or of the Gospel if the Creed is not said, the priest kisses the altar and turning to the congregation extends the liturgical greeting, "The Lord be with you," and after the response, "And with thy spirit," says, "Let us pray." This is obviously an introduction to some particular part of the Mass. Today it has reference to the Offertorium and the various offertory prayers, but originally it introduced the "Prayers of the Faithful" which are no longer part of the liturgy.

The priest then reads the Offertorium, which for the Feast of the Transfiguration is: "Glory and wealth shall be in His house: and

His justice remaineth forever and ever. Alleluia" (Ps. 111:3). At chanted Mass the Offertorium is also sung by the choir.

The offering of the bread then follows, during which the priest elevates it on the paten somewhat above the altar and prays: "Receive, O holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, this immaculate host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer to Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences, for all those present, and for all faithful Christians living and dead, that it may avail both me and them unto life everlasting. Amen."

The above prayer having been recited, the offering of the wine takes place. The priest, taking the wine from the server at the Epistle side of the altar, pours it into the chalice and adds a few drops of water. While doing so, he recites the significant prayer: "O God, who hath in a wondrous manner created and ennobled human nature, and in a still more wondrous way hath renewed it, grant that by the mystical union of this water and wine we may be made to partake of His divinity, who hast deigned to partake of our humanity, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord: Who with Thee liveth and reigneth with the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen." *The water represents our human nature, the wine the divine nature.* The chalice used at the Last Supper probably contained some water mingled with the wine, for the custom of mixing water with wine was quite common among the ancient people. Furthermore, it is probable that Jesus consecrated the third of the four cups of wine^{2a} at the Last Supper; and according to the paschal rite this was always mixed with water.

The celebrant returns to the middle of the altar and says the offering prayer for the wine, elevating the chalice as he did the bread: "We offer Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, begging Thy clemency, that it may rise up in the sight of Thy divine majesty, an odor of sweetness for our salvation and that of the whole world. Amen." The deacon at Solemn Mass places his hand beneath the arm of the celebrant during the elevation of the chalice.

The priest, bowing before the center of the altar, now recites the prayer: "In the spirit of humility and with a contrite heart, let

^{2a} According to the ritual of the paschal feast, which was then being celebrated, there were four cups of wine.



The priest raises the bread on the paten and recites the prayer "Receive, O Holy Father, . . ."

us be received by Thee, O Lord, and let our sacrifice be so made that it may be pleasing each day in Thy sight, O Lord God." The priest then blesses the bread and wine with the Sign of the Cross, and makes an upward motion of his arms as if to invoke the Holy Spirit to sanctify the offerings, saying: "Come Thou, the Sanctifier, almighty and everlasting God, and bless this sacrifice prepared for Thy holy name."

At Solemn Mass the celebrant next incenses the offerings and the altar. The priest is then incensed. Afterward the sacred ministers who assist him, the clergy present in the sanctuary, and finally the members of the congregation are incensed.

Formerly, when leavened bread was used at Mass, it was necessary for the priest to wash his hands after the Offertory before proceeding with the Canon. Today the ceremony of the washing of the hands still continues. It is performed at the Epistle side of the altar and signifies, as it always has in the liturgy, a spiritual cleansing. As the priest washes his hands he recites the following verses of the twenty-fifth psalm: "I will wash my hands among the innocent: and will compass Thy altar, O Lord. So that I may hear the voice of Thy praise: and tell of all Thy wondrous works. I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth.

"Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked: nor my life with the men of blood. In whose hands are iniquities: their right hand is filled with gifts. But as for me I have walked in my innocence: redeem me and have mercy on me. My foot hath stood in the right path: in the churches, I will bless Thee, O Lord." These verses are concluded with the doxology, "Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen."

Bowing before the center of the altar, the priest now recites the prayer to the blessed Trinity: "Receive, O holy Trinity, this offering we make to Thee in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honor of Blessed Mary ever virgin, of blessed John the Baptist, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, of these and of all the saints, that it may avail to their glory and our salvation, and may they deign to intercede for us in heaven whom we remember on earth, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."



Today the washing of the hands signifies, as it always has
in the liturgy, a spiritual cleansing.

At the end of the above prayer the priest turns to the people with this invitation to pray: "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father almighty," and the response is: "May the Lord receive the sacrifice of thy hands, to the praise and glory of His name, to our benefit and that of all His holy Church."

After pronouncing an "Amen" to the above prayer, the priest proceeds with the Secret. As has been stated, this prayer was once the sole Offertory prayer of the Mass. It resembles the Collect and Postcommunion in structure. A variable part of the Mass, the name of the saint is generally mentioned if it is the Mass of a saint. Various reasons are given for the name of this prayer. Some tell us that it was called the Secret because it was said by the celebrant during the Offertory chant and therefore had to be recited silently. Others claim that the name Secret was given to distinguish it from the Collect, since the Secret³ was recited only in the presence of the Faithful while the Collect was said with both the Catechumens and the baptized present.

The Secret for the Feast of the Transfiguration is: "Sanctify, O Lord, we beseech Thee, the gifts we offer through the glorious Transfiguration of Thine only-begotten Son, and in the brightness of His glory may we be cleansed from all stain of sin, through the same Lord."

The Consecration

The end of the Offertory prayers marks the beginning of the Canon or Consecration, which is introduced by the "Preface" which will be explained later as well as the various other parts of the Canon. But for the present it will be sufficient to state that the Consecration (Canon) as it exists today is a very ancient and the most important part of the Mass text.

In the Consecration we have come to the very essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass. The offerings of mere bread and wine to God are obviously inadequate. Symbolizing, however, the lives of those present at Mass they become of greater value. Yet even so as gifts offered the divinity they are insufficient. For God is an

³ The English word "secret" is from a Latin word meaning to segregate; hence, the antithesis in the terms "Collect" and "Secret."



"Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

infinite being, and only that which is itself infinite is worthy of Him.

A worthy gift was once offered God on Mount Calvary. For there His Son, who is divine as well as human, offered Himself to His eternal Father. There Christ *really* shed His blood. This worthy gift was also offered the night before at the Last Supper *in anticipation of Christ's death on the cross on the morrow*. There Christ, taking "bread into His holy and venerable hands," said: "Take and eat; this is my body." And taking a chalice of wine, He said: "All of you drink of this, for this is my blood." Here Christ died *mystically*, for in a special manner the Saviour's presence under the form of bread *symbolized His body only*, and His presence under the form of wine *symbolized His blood only*. This symbolization of the separation of Christ's body and blood represented *His death on the morrow*.

Furthermore, what Christ did at the Last Supper before His death He empowered His Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, to do after His death when He said: "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Mass, then, is not essentially different from the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is rather a continuation of it, or the same sacrifice performed in an unbloody manner. The victim, Jesus Christ, is the same. Even the priest is the same, for although the celebrant at Mass is indeed human he represents in a special manner the God-Man, who was priest as well as victim at Calvary when He offered Himself to His eternal Father and continues to be both Priest and Victim in the Mass.

From what has been said it is evident that those who assist at Mass are able to participate intimately in Christ's sacrifice; for the offerings on the altar, representing the immolation of their lives, are changed into the body and blood of Christ. It is evident, too, that an important conclusion is to be drawn from this symbolic association. If Christ dies again, mystically, those who participate in the Mass should, likewise, die in spirit with Him. This may be accomplished by detachment from the things of this world and by bearing patiently with all the ills of human life.

In a word, to suffer and die in union with Christ is to *live the Mass*. One's whole life should be an immolation even as was Christ's. For such a one the words of the Saviour become most

significant. "Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple." Living the Mass helps one also to appreciate better many statements of the Apostle of the Gentiles such as: "I die daily"; "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and even the words He wrote his Galatian converts: "My dear children, with whom I am in labor again, until Christ is formed in you."

Through the Canon or Consecration prayer the celebrant of the Mass exercises the indescribable power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This great liturgical prayer is recited by the priest alone, for it has to do in a special manner with a priestly act. It is said in a very low tone because of reverence for its contents. The word "Canon" is of Greek origin, and means a "rule," for from very early times the wording of this prayer might not be changed.

In its main outline, the history of the Canon may be given as follows. At the Last Supper the Saviour "blessed" or gave thanks as He instituted the Eucharist. Now the term for *blessed* was the same in the Greek language in the time of Christ as for "gave thanks." The word in Greek for "thanksgiving" (*eucharistia*) came, therefore, to be applied by the early Christians to the prayer used to consecrate bread and wine.

The exact words used by Christ when He "gave thanks" at the Last Supper are not known. But it would seem that He probably recalled the favors enjoyed by mankind in general and the Hebrew race in particular since the time of Abraham, dwelling on the deliverance of the chosen people, as the paschal feast which was being celebrated at the time suggested.

In literally obeying the injunction of the Saviour: "Do this in remembrance of me," by the act of consecration of bread and wine, the Apostles may have used the Eucharistic phrases they heard from the lips of their Divine Master or they may have adapted their own terminology to the act. By the middle of the second century there may have been among the successors of the Apostles no very great tendency to adhere to a fixed form for the Consecration prayer. The wording of it was still, perhaps, left in a large measure to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. An interesting reference to the Eucharistic prayer of this time is found in the famous letter of St. Justin, Martyr, to the Roman emperor. Nat-

urally no words of the prayer are quoted in such a letter. The letter, however, states that the *prayer is of great length*.

Toward the beginning of the third century the text of an Eucharistic prayer appears in a work called the *Apostolic Tradition*. The wording of this prayer is similar to, and even in some instances identical with, that of our present Canon. Another and a very important form of the Eucharistic prayer is contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, composed perhaps about the end of the fourth century. As found here it resembles very closely our Canon. The prayer is very long. Enumerating the blessings of creation, it recounts the principal favors bestowed upon mankind as related in the Old Testament. The prayer dwells at some length on the work of the Redemption, relating events in the life of the Saviour up to the Last Supper; the words of the institution of the Eucharist are then given. The prayer contains an invocation to the Holy Ghost and closes with a prayer of praise.

By the end of the sixth century, during the reign of Pope Gregory the Great, the Canon was already in its present form. Of this we are certain. But probably it had already crystallized into its present form at a much earlier period. It is definitely known, therefore, that except for a few additions of minor importance this great prayer of the Church has remained unchanged for thirteen hundred years or more.

Let us now consider the various parts of this prayer. The Preface, the introduction to the Canon, has been so called from early medieval days. In the ancient Church this introduction to the Eucharistic prayer (the Canon) was very lengthy, although it was then as now a hymn of praise to God.

Originally, the Preface was freely composed by the celebrant of the Mass. Later, however, it appeared in fixed form, yet one for each Mass of the liturgical year. But soon the number was reduced. And although four new ones have been recently added, there are still but fifteen Prefaces in the Missal. These belong mostly to important seasonal and feast day Masses of the ecclesiastical year. They include also a special Preface for Requiem Masses, and a Common Preface, which is used at feast day Masses not having a special one. The Preface is recited by the priest at the Low Mass and chanted by him at the High or Solemn Mass.

A prelude to each Preface appears in dialogue form. It consists of simple acclamations which are *possibly of Apostolic origin*.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

Priest: Let us lift up our hearts.

Response: We have lifted them to the Lord.

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Response: For it is meet and just.

It is even possible that the above words formed part of the Saviour's prayer at the Last Supper.

The first few lines of the Preface remain constant.⁴ The text then varies so as to express some thought of the liturgical season or feast. The Preface sung at the Mass of the Transfiguration is the Christmas Preface. It is as follows:

"It is truly meet and just, right and availing to salvation, that we at all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God. Because by the mystery of the Word made flesh, the light of Thy glory hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind: so that as we acknowledge Him as God seen by men, we may be drawn by Him to the love of things unseen."

The remainder of the Preface varies little throughout the year. It is best appreciated by those who know both Latin and music. For the Latin text represents an early form of Christian poetry, and the music to which it is sung has been praised by many famous composers. The theme of the Preface reaches great heights in the conclusion with a reference to angels praising and glorifying God:

"And therefore with angels and archangels, with thrones and dominations, and with the whole host of the heavenly army, we sing a hymn to Thy glory proclaiming ceaselessly."

With the celestial choirs those in church join in spirit in the chant:

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of the Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest."

Let us now turn to the various parts of the Canon that follow the Preface and the above chant. After the celebrant has pronounced the words "Holy, holy, holy, etc.," he extends and raises

⁴ Except in the case of the Preface of the Apostles.

his hands. Then, bowing profoundly, he begins to pray, in a low voice and with outstretched hands:

“Wherefore, O most clement Father, we humbly pray and beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to receive and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices, which in the first place we offer Thee for Thy holy Catholic Church, that it may please Thee to grant her peace, as also to protect, unite, and govern her throughout the world, together with Thy servant, *N.* our pope, *N.* our bishop, as also all true believers and professors of the Catholic and apostolic faith.”

The celebrant makes the sign of the cross over the offering after the words “these gifts,” also after “these offerings” and “this holy and unblemished sacrifice.” With the words that follow the part of the Canon known as the “intercession” begins. The first *N.* indicates that the name of the pope is to be inserted and the second *N.* the name of the bishop in whose diocese the Mass is celebrated.

A special remembrance is then made of *living* members of the Church: “Be mindful,⁵ O Lord, of Thy servants and handmaids, *N.* and *N.* and of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer, or who offer unto Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and theirs, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their welfare and salvation, who pay their vows to Thee, the everlasting, living, and true God.” Where *N.* and *N.* occur, the names of those for whom one wishes to pray in particular are to be inserted.

In the next prayer the Catholic teaching known as the “Communion of Saints” becomes evident:

Communicating and venerating first the memory of the glorious and ever Virgin, Mary, Mother of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ; as also of Thy blessed Apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Thaddeus; Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and of all Thy saints: by whose merits and prayers grant that in all things we may be defended by the help of Thy protection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

⁵ Here the celebrant brings together his hands and bows his head.

In the above prayer the name of Mary is mentioned first, her full title being given; then the names of the twelve Apostles (Paul being mentioned rather than Matthias for he is a patron saint of Rome). Then come twelve other martyrs. *Linus, Cletus, and Clement* were immediate successors of Peter in the see of Rome. The other names are all those of saints who were greatly revered by the early Christians at Rome.

The "intercession" is now discontinued and the essential theme of the Canon resumed:

We, therefore, beseech Thee that Thou wouldst be appeased and receive this offering, which we Thy servants and Thy whole household make to Thee. Dispose our days in Thy peace and grant that we may be saved from everlasting damnation and be numbered within the fold of Thy elect. Amen.

Note the phrase "Thy whole household" referring to the Christian body. The latter part of this prayer is not as ancient as the former, probably being added by St. Gregory the Great during the chaotic conditions in Western Europe following the overthrow of the Roman Empire.

Originally this prayer often expressed some special intention for which the Mass was offered. There are still three variants of the text. The prayer at Easter and Pentecost refers to the newly baptized. A special intention is also expressed in the prayer on Holy Thursday, and at the Mass for the Consecration of a bishop.

As the celebrant reads the prayer he extends his hands over the offerings. This is a sign that Christ, the Victim in the Mass, takes upon Himself the sins of mankind. The high priest at the Temple in Jerusalem once signified vicarious atonement by laying his hands on the sacrifice.

The prayer which follows is older than the preceding and is closely related to the essential words of Consecration:

Which oblation do Thou, O God, vouchsafe in all respects to bless, approve, ratify, and make acceptable that it may become for us the body and blood of Thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

As he reads this solemn prayer, the celebrant makes the Sign of the Cross five times over the offerings. The text of the Canon tells us the kind of blessing that is asked — *namely that of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ*. It is the sort



Christ becomes sacramentally present upon the altar when the priest utters the words, "This is my Body."

of blessing about which St. Paul wrote: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not the sharing of the blood of Christ? And the bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. 10:16.)

We have come now to the very heart of the Canon, the essential words of the Consecration. Here the text of the Mass is based substantially on the words of the institution of the Eucharist. Some phrases, however, are from other parts of Sacred Scripture; a few are from early Christian tradition.

Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with eyes lifted up to heaven, unto Thee, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, He blessed, broke, and gave to His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this, FOR THIS IS MY BODY.

As the celebrant says "took bread," he takes the bread from the altar into his hands; as he says "and with His eyes lifted up to heaven," he raises his eyes upward; at the word "blessed," he makes the Sign of the Cross over the bread with his right hand. When he pronounces the words "for this is my body," a great liturgical act takes place. In so far as possible, the human priest divests himself of his personality so that the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, may act and speak through him. His words and gestures are, as it were, those of the Saviour at the Last Supper. Christ becomes present sacramentally upon the altar when the priest utters these words even as at one time the Word became incarnate with the consent of Mary: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Although the *Sacrament* is now on the altar, there is yet no *sacrifice*. For this we must wait until Christ becomes present also under the form of *wine*. For even though the species of bread after its consecration contains both the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless it represents *His body only*, and it is only after the wine has been consecrated also (which represents *His blood only*), that there is a representation of the Lord's death — *a showing forth of His death*.

After the changing of bread into the body and blood of Christ, the priest proceeds with the consecration of the wine: "In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, and also giving thanks to Thee, He blessed, and gave to His disciples, saying: TAKE AND DRINK YE

ALL OF THIS, FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING TESTAMENT, THE MYSTERY OF FAITH, WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS.

After the words "holy and venerable hands," the priest takes the chalice; at the word "blessed," he makes the Sign of the Cross over it. After the words "For this is the chalice of my blood," the contents of the chalice is changed into the body and blood of Christ.

As the priest pronounces the words of each consecration he bends over the altar reverently, repeating the words silently.⁶ He genuflects immediately afterward to adore our Lord; then he elevates the sacred species so that the people may see and adore, and afterward places it upon the altar before which he genuflects once more. At each of these motions the server⁷ rings a bell to signalize to the people the importance of these actions.

There now follows the *Remembrance*, or *anamnesis* as it is called by liturgists. The first words of this prayer were spoken by Christ Himself: "As often as ye shall do these things ye shall do them in memory of me." But the remainder was composed by the early Church. During this part of the Canon the priest again prays with outstretched hands:

Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, remembering the blessed passion of the same Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, and also His resurrection from hell as well as His glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy most excellent majesty, of Thine own gifts bestowed on us, a pure gift, a holy gift, a spotless victim, the holy bread of everlasting life and the chalice of everlasting salvation.

As the priest reads the latter part he makes the Sign of the Cross five times over the body and blood of Christ. This is to indicate that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross.

The above prayer probably comes down to us from almost the days of the Apostles. Its antiquity is evident from certain phrases in it. "We Thy servants, as also Thy holy people" are the clergy and the faithful. The Passion is "*blessed*" because of the merits that flow from it.

As we read this part of the Canon, we should remember that

⁶ That is, in a low voice so that he is not heard by those in the church.

⁷ The server holds the end of the priest's chasuble during each elevation. This is merely a ceremony reminiscent of early times when such an act was necessary because of the size and shape of this vestment.



The priest elevates the sacred Host for the people to see and adore.

the Mass is the greatest of *commemorative services*. At the feast of the Passover, when it was instituted, the deliverance of the Israelites was being celebrated, a deliverance which typified the loosening of the bonds of sin through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. We should remember also that the Mass commemorates explicitly Christ's death: "As often as ye shall do these things, ye shall shew forth the death of the Lord until He come," but implicitly it commemorates also Christ's *Resurrection* and *Ascension*, for these two miracles were *signs of the divine acceptance of Christ's sacrificial death*.

The Canon now returns to the theme of offering sacrifice:

Upon which do Thou deign to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept them, as Thou was graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel. the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high priest Melchisedech offered Thee, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

The innocent Abel, the obedient Abraham, and the royal priest Melchisedech were but types of the great high priest, Jesus Christ. *What virtue, then, should be expected of those who actually share in the priesthood of Christ?*

We most humbly beseech Thee, almighty God, to command that these things be borne by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thine altar on high, in the sight of Thy divine majesty, that as many of us (*here the priest kisses the altar*) as at this altar, shall partake of and receive *the Cross over the consecrated bread and wine and also upon himself*) the most holy body and blood of Thy Son (*here he makes the Sign of* may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reciting the above prayer, the priest bows profoundly; he makes the Sign of the Cross upon himself to indicate he would have applied to himself the blessing of the sacrifice.

In this part of the Canon the thought of offering the divine victim reaches a climax. Inspired, apparently, by a passage from the Apocalypse,⁸ this prayer is of unusual beauty and sublimity. The familiar imagery in Sacred Scripture of an angel acting as an intermediary between heaven and earth is made use of. Some have believed that the angel referred to in this deeply mystical portion of the Canon is Michael, others think no angel in particular but

⁸ Apoc. 8:3, 4.

only angels in general are referred to. It is probable, however, that the angel is Christ, the Angel of the Great Counsel.

Three "memento" prayers in the second half of the Canon balance, as it were, three in the first. The groups represented in the first were the *Church, living persons* for whom one especially wishes to pray, and the *saints* in heaven. Also two "offering" prayers in the latter half of the Canon balance two in the first. Those in the first began "We, therefore, beseech Thee that Thou wouldst be appeased and receive this offering . . ." and "Which oblation do Thou, O God. . ." The two offering prayers in the latter half were "Upon which do Thou deign to look with a propitious and serene countenance . . ." and "We most humbly beseech Thee, almighty God, to command that these things be borne by the hands of the holy angel . . ." Now let us consider the three "memento" prayers in the latter half of the Canon.

Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids *N. and N.* who are gone before us with the sign of faith and sleep in the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beg Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace.⁹

Beautifully simple, the language of this prayer resembles that found inscribed on the catacomb walls. The truly Christian manner of referring to departed brethren should be noted. They are not spoken of as the dead but as "those who are gone before us" and "who sleep in the sleep of peace." The words of the prayer seem almost to suggest that the departed are present with one at Mass. "The sign of peace" is the seal of Baptism.

To us sinners also, Thy servants, hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies, deign to grant some part and fellowship with Thy holy Apostles and martyrs, John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and all the saints into whose company we pray Thee to admit us, not considering our own merits but Thy own free pardon.

"With true Christian modesty," as Dr. Parsch observes, we ask last of all in this prayer for *ourselves*, some part in the fruit of the sacrifice. The list of saints seems to fill in those greatly venerated at Rome who for some reason or other are omitted in the list given in the first part of the Canon. *John*, no doubt, is St. John

⁹ While praying here the priest brings together his hands and bows his head.

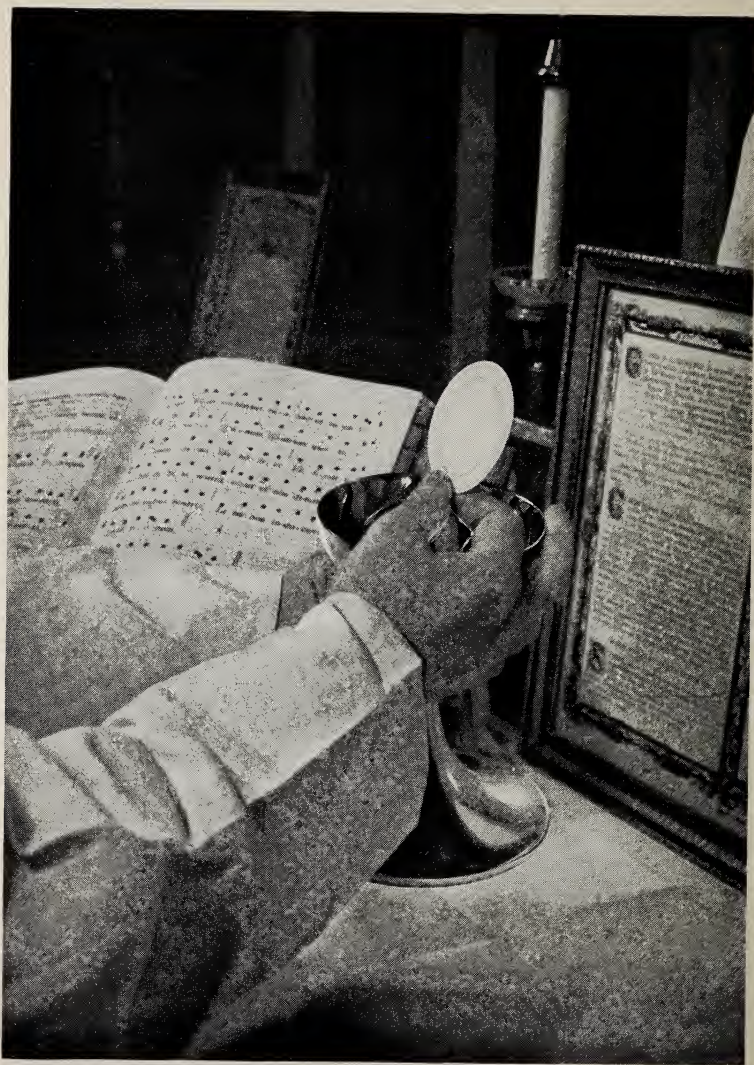
the Baptist. He is named first, for "there has not risen among them born of woman a greater." *Stephen* is the protomartyr. *Matthias'* name in the first part of the Canon gave place to that of Paul, so he is mentioned here. *Barnabas* was the great co-worker of St. Paul. *Ignatius* was the successor of St. Peter in the see of Antioch and the author of a number of important epistles. *Alexander* was a pope; *Marcellinus*, a priest; and *Peter*, an exorcist; *Felicity* and *Perpetua* were martyrs from Carthage; *Agatha* and *Lucy*, virgins and martyrs from Sicily. *Agnes* was a famous early Roman martyr and still a patroness of Rome. *Cecilia*, a patrician maiden of Rome, was put to death in the early part of the second century. *Anastasia*, a Roman widow, like the others mentioned in the list, received the palm of martyrdom. At the foot of the Palatine hill in Rome, a church was erected in her honor.

Through whom, O Lord, Thou dost create, hallow, quicken, and bless these Thine everlasting property and bestow it upon us.

The above words of the Canon have to do with the third and final "memento"—that of *nature*. Of the effects of original sin, St. Paul writes: "All creation groans and travails in pain . . .", referring to the state of nature before Christ's death. But the Saviour died to undo evils caused by Adam's sin. Therefore, all things in nature are represented as *drawn toward* the Eucharistic Christ—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." The Mass, we should remember, is the mystical death of Christ.

Besides the bread and wine which were consecrated, the Faithful used to bring *various* other gifts to the church to be blessed at Mass. The above words of the Canon are but a relic of the form once used in blessing these. We should recall, too, that even today oil which is to be used in administering the Sacraments is blessed by the bishop at this part of the Mass on Holy Thursday. The custom of blessing grapes at Mass on the Feast of the Transfiguration prevailed also in certain localities of Europe until comparatively recent times.

The Canon ends with the following words, "By Him, with Him, and in Him"—here the celebrant makes the sign of the cross three times over the chalice with the large consecrated Host—"is to Thee, God the Father almighty in the unity of the Holy Ghost,



At the end of the Canon the priest elevates the consecrated species slightly to symbolize the offering of the divine Victim.

all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.” — again, making the Sign of the Cross twice with the Host, this time over a portion of the altar. Thus is expressed by a doxology filled with meaning, the glory Christ the Mediator renders God. Before the final “Amen” is pronounced, the celebrant elevates the consecrated species slightly¹⁰ to symbolize the *offering up of the divine Victim*.

With the close of this important part of the Mass the sacrifice-oblation ends and the sacrifice-banquet begins. From now on the action will not be that of our giving to God but rather that of His giving to us.

The Communion

The Communion¹¹ follows logically from the Offertory and the Consecration. This becomes apparent when we consider the Old Testament sacrifices prescribed by Moses which were types of the *perfect and infinite sacrifice of the Cross*. The sacrificial lamb brought to the Temple at Jerusalem was slain and *partly burned*. This partial consuming of the sacrifice typified God’s partaking of the offering. The priest and the one providing the sacrifice then partook of the flesh of the lamb. Furthermore, the blood of the lamb poured upon the altar made the flesh legally holy, and those who partook of that flesh became themselves *legally holy*.

But at Mass, Christ the sacrificial Lamb of the New Testament imparts *real* sanctity to those who partake of His flesh in the sacrament of the Eucharist. At the Offertory the bread and wine offered by the Faithful through their priest were accepted by the heavenly Father. In the Consecration they were transformed into the body and blood of His beloved Son. And now in the Communion this “bread come down from heaven” is given back to the Faithful that they may be nourished with divine life. But let us now consider the various prayers and ceremonies in the Communion of the Mass.

Oremus (Let us pray).

Taught by saving precepts and following divine commandments, we venture to exclaim:

¹⁰ This was once the only elevation in the Canon. Only in medieval times did the custom of elevating the sacramental species after the (essential) words of consecration, begin.

¹¹ The word itself, it should be noted, means “union with.”

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation.

Response: But deliver us from evil.

Priest: Amen.

The "Our Father" is recited by the priest at Low Mass and chanted by him at High and Solemn Mass.

Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils past, present, and to come, and the blessed and glorious Mary ever virgin, Mother of God, interceding, together with Thy blessed apostles, Peter and Paul and Andrew, and all the saints, mercifully grant peace in our days, that through the help of Thy mercy we may be ever free from sin and secure from every disturbance.

Invoking God as our common father, the Our Father reminds us of the unity the Eucharist effects. For this sacrament was instituted not only to unite us with Christ, but also to unite individual members of the Church one with another, through Christ the head of the Mystical Body.

The petition "Give us this day our daily bread," according to certain of the Fathers of the Church, is to be interpreted as a prayer to receive the Eucharist daily; the petition "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" should *remind us of a most important Christian disposition in those who presume to receive Holy Communion.*

The Lord's Prayer has been recited in this part of the Roman Mass since the days of Pope Gregory the Great. The epilogue ("Deliver us, we beseech . . ."), developing at some length the last words of the prayer, was seemingly also introduced into the liturgy by the same pope. The words "mercifully grant peace in our days"¹² reflect the effect of the troublous times upon the mind of St. Gregory. Special mention of the Apostle, Andrew, is made, for St. Gregory had great devotion to this Apostle, having converted his own home on the Coelian way into a monastery and dedicated it to him.

The epilogue is recited in a very low tone except for its concluding words.

¹² A similar phrase in the first part of the Canon is also attributed to Pope St. Gregory.

The Breaking of Bread and the Mingling in the Chalice

It is essential that one appreciate fully the significance of the breaking of the consecrated bread into three particles and the mingling of the smallest particle in the chalice, if he is to understand the Mass. At Solemn Mass the subdeacon brings the paten which he has been holding (with a veil over his shoulders, one end of which covers the paten) to the altar so that the priest may place the consecrated bread on it. Before the conclusion of the epilogue to the Lord's Prayer, the priest genuflects, takes the consecrated bread from the paten, and holding it over the chalice, says aloud the conclusion of the epilogue, "For ever and ever." The response "Amen" is made. Just before the priest recites the above words he breaks the Host into two equal parts, laying one half on the paten and breaking a small particle from the other. With the small particle of the Host he makes the Sign of the Cross three times over the chalice, reciting the words "The peace of the Lord be always with you." The response is made "and with thy spirit." Then allowing the particle to fall into the chalice to be mingled with the consecrated wine he says, "May this mingling and consecration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ avail us that receive it unto life everlasting. Amen."

The priest then genuflects, bows before the altar, and says three times as he looks upon the sacred Host "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world," adding the first and second time "have mercy on us," but the third time "grant us peace." He then recites the following prayer for peace: "O Lord Jesus Christ who didst say to Thine Apostles: Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; regard not My sins but rather the faith of the Church and vouchsafe unto her that peace and unity which is agreeable to thy holy will, who livest and reignest God for ever and ever. Amen."

"Breaking the bread" was an expression in common use in the early Church for the Mass. It is twice used in the Acts of the Apostles to designate this sacrifice. It signifies, too, the *effect of the sacrificial meal upon the Christian*. We should remember that in ancient times it was the custom among the Jews for the host or guest of honor to break the bread for those who sat at table

with him. The breaking of bread was then of practical importance in as much as the shape of the loaves was such that the bread could more readily be broken than cut with a knife. *Ever since the Last Supper, the breaking of the consecrated bread has been an important ceremony at Mass.* For many centuries it was a necessary function (when leavened bread was used in the service), *but at all times it has been a symbol of the bond which exists between individual members of the congregation and of their union with Christ, the head of the Church.*

One understands this part of the Mass better if he recalls in some detail the manner of celebrating the papal Mass in earlier centuries. The pope upon entering the Roman basilica bowed to the "sancta" brought to him by two acolytes. The "sancta" was a consecrated Host from the previous Mass celebrated in the basilica. As the pope celebrated the Mass, he pronounced the words "the peace of the Lord be always with you" before the Communion and placed the "sancta" or consecrated Host in the chalice, where it became mingled with the precious blood. He then broke a portion of Bread consecrated at that Mass and placed it upon the altar. This was probably the "sancta" for the next Mass.

While the priests assisting the pope were breaking the consecrated Bread for the Communion of the Faithful, the choir sang "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world," repeating the words over and over again. The pope broke the consecrated Bread which he was to receive in holy Communion, placing a portion of it in his chalice to be mingled with the consecrated Wine. As he did so he pronounced the words: "May this mingling and consecration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ avail us that receive it unto everlasting life. Amen."

Today there is only one breaking of bread at Mass. This fraction takes the place of the first and second breaking of the bread in the ancient Mass, and the mingling which occurs in our Mass today is at the point where the "sancta" was formerly placed in the chalice.¹³

The "sancta" in the early Church symbolized the continuity of the sacrifice. It was a link by which each Mass was joined with the preceding one. In addition to keeping the "sancta," it was also

¹³ Parsch-Eckhoff, *The Liturgy of the Mass* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1937).

customary in the early Church to send a portion of the sacred Host consecrated at a papal Mass to other churches in Rome to be received by the bishops, who celebrated Mass there, as a sign of their union with the pope, the vicar of Christ.

The *kiss of peace* follows the prayer for peace in our Mass today. A sign of fraternal charity, it occurs very appropriately in the Roman rite before the clergy and the faithful take part in the sacred banquet, for which it is a preparation. The kiss of peace is generally given only at Solemn Mass. The priest, kissing the altar, gives the amplexus (embrace) to the deacon, saying, "Peace be to you." The deacon says, "And with thy spirit." The kiss of peace is then given to the subdeacon who in turn gives it to other members of the clergy in the sanctuary. In a few churches there is the custom at Low Mass of the priest, first kissing the altar and then an instrument called a Pax-board which is kissed by the server who passes it to the congregation to be kissed by each member. One should remember, of course, that the altar represents Christ and that in this ceremony, therefore, the action is represented as originating with Christ.

The kiss of peace is one of the oldest elements in the liturgy. St. Peter writes: "Salute one another with an holy kiss." St. Paul gives this injunction at the end of a number of his epistles. The note of peace one would indeed expect to find in the Mass-liturgy, for it is only through the sacrifice of Christ that real peace has been made possible for mankind.¹⁴ Peace is expressed in those parts of the Mass that occur between the Lord's Prayer and the kiss of peace, and is really a remote preparation for Communion.

Now let us consider the proximate preparation for Communion in the liturgy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who of the will of the Father and cooperation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world, deliver me by this Thy most holy body and blood, from all my iniquities and from all evils, and make me always adhere to Thy commandments and never suffer me to be separated from Thee. Who with the same God, Father, and Holy Ghost livest and reignest God forever. Amen.

Let not the receiving of Thy body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, an unworthy servant, presume to take turn to my judgment and condemnation, but through Thy loving kindness may it be unto me a

¹⁴ Parsch-Eckhoff, *op. cit.*

safeguard and remedy both of soul and body. Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest God forever and ever. Amen.

These prayers are said in a low voice by the priest, as he bows before the altar. They are his private preparation before Communion. They were recited at Mass as early as the eleventh century in certain localities, gradually becoming a part of the Roman rite. Unlike the liturgical prayers of the early Church, they are addressed to the Saviour.

In the first prayer the three Persons of the Trinity through whom salvation is wrought are mentioned, and the hope through Communion of obtaining the fruits of redemption expressed. In the second there is emphasized the warning given by St. Paul regarding an unworthy reception of Holy Communion.

Genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament, the priest says: "I will take the bread of heaven and call upon the name of the Lord." This is an adaptation of Psalm 115:4.

Taking the sacred Host in his left hand and bowing, the priest humbly strikes his breast three times as he looks upon the Host, pronouncing each time the words of the centurion: "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and Thy servant shall be healed," the words "my soul" being substituted for "Thy servant."

Priest and Laity Receive Holy Communion

After the words "O Lord, I am not worthy . . ." have been recited three times, the priest taking the consecrated Bread (both particles) makes with it the Sign of the Cross, saying: "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." Bending over the altar he consumes the sacred species (body and blood of Christ). He then pauses for a brief *private* thanksgiving. Gathering up (by means of the paten) particles of the sacred Host that may have become detached on the corporal, the priest says: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. Praising, I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my sins." These verses of Psalm 115 are a beautiful expression of thanksgiving after Holy Communion.



The Communion of the Faithful.

The priest then raises the chalice and makes with it the Sign of the Cross, saying: "May the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." He then drinks the contents of the chalice.

The Communion of the Faithful now follows. The Confiteor is recited by the server. The Faithful approach the altar rail where they kneel to receive Holy Communion. The priest places the sacred Host on the tongue of each communicant, and says, "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life. Amen."

The Communion at Mass has, of course, ever remained the same *essentially*. But the *manner* in which it is administered has indeed greatly changed in the course of centuries. For example, at one time the Faithful stood rather than knelt¹⁵ when they received Communion. In the early Church, too, it was the custom for men to receive the Host in the palm of the right hand, the palm of the hand of women being covered with a cloth. Furthermore, the Eucharist was, for a long time, administered under the form of leavened bread. In addition to these changes there was the custom of the laity as well as of the clergy receiving under both forms—bread and wine. This practice disappeared in the Roman rite about the twelfth century. The reason of its discontinuance would seem evident. At first the laity had received from the chalice itself. Later a silver or golden tube was used. But when large numbers received Holy Communion, including children, there was danger of accidents. It is important to remember, nevertheless, that Christians believed even in the very early days of the Church that both Christ's body and His blood were present under either form. For how else can we explain the custom which we know existed among early Christians of keeping the Eucharist in their homes under only the form of bread for administering to the sick? There is, too, the obvious fact that if Christ's body were alone really present under the form of bread and His blood alone really present under the form of wine, He would be *in a state of death*. But St. Paul writes: "Christ having risen from the dead, *dies now no more*, death shall no longer have dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9).

It may be said, however, that if there is a more reverent manner

¹⁵ In apostolic days Christians communicated reclining, later sitting.

of receiving the Eucharist today, something of the *spirit* of the Mass is now absent at Communion time. *For formerly all present in church received Holy Communion.* They understood, furthermore, that taking part in the sacred banquet was not merely personal, but also, and indeed primarily, *a social act of religion* as well — “We though many, are one body all of us who partake of the one bread.”

The Communion being over, what follows at the altar is precisely what one would expect. The chalice which contained the sacred species is cleansed. The forefinger and thumb of the celebrant's both hands which have held the Host are washed and dried with a special cloth called a purificator. The corporal¹⁶ also, on which the Eucharistic species had rested, is scanned for small particles that might have become detached¹⁷ from the consecrated Bread. We know that the famous St. Cyril of Jerusalem cautioned Christians of his day to take care lest even the most minute Eucharistic particles be lost.

Accordingly, after the Communion the priest has wine poured into the chalice. This is an ablution of the chalice. Before consuming it, he says: “Grant, O Lord, that what we have taken with our mouth, may be received with a pure mind, and from a temporal gift become an eternal remedy.” Then, taking the chalice to the Epistle side of the altar, he has the minister, or server, pour a few drops of wine and a quantity of water on his fingers, which he holds over, or in, the chalice, meanwhile saying: “May Thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy blood which I have drunk, adhere to my inmost being, and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me, whom Thy pure body and holy sacrament has refreshed, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.” Returning to the center of the altar, he wipes his fingers with the purificator and drinks the contents of the chalice. He then dries the chalice with the purificator, thus completing the ablutions, after which he covers the chalice with the veil and places the burse on top of it.

¹⁶ When the purificator and corporal are to be laundried, the priest himself first rinses them in water which he afterward pours into a sacarium.

¹⁷ This was done at the celebrant's Communion when such particles, if found, were placed in the chalice.

Communion Chant

As those in church receive Communion, an antiphon is sometimes sung. Formerly a whole psalm was chanted; in the early Church it was invariably the thirty-third which contains the verse: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet. Blessed is he that hopeth in him." But somewhat later, other psalms with an antiphon repeated after each verse were substituted.

Thus during the Communion as at the Introit and the Offertory a chant took place. And it was a processional one, too, as the Faithful approached the sacred banquet table. It suggested pious sentiments as they received Holy Communion. In the Middle Ages the Communion chant became abbreviated, fewer verses of the psalm were sung. And at the present time there is generally only the antiphon recited by the priest and sung by the choir at chanted Mass. At Low Mass the antiphon is recited by the priest after the ablutions have taken place. The psalm sung as a Communion chant is a variable part of the Mass. It does not as a rule refer to the sacred banquet directly, but usually expresses the mystical action of the particular Mass being celebrated. One should, therefore, dwell on the thought expressed in the Communion antiphon. For each time one receives Holy Communion, the Lord may grant a special grace corresponding to the seasonal or festal mystery celebrated.¹⁸

The antiphon at the Feast of the Transfiguration is: "Tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9).

The Postcommunion

The Postcommunion¹⁹ is a thanksgiving for Communion and a petition for the enduring fruits of Communion.²⁰ In form it is a prayer. It is read by the priest, at the Epistle side of the altar, immediately after he has recited the Communion antiphon. Since the priest reads the Postcommunion in the name of the people, he kisses the altar and turns toward the congregation with the greeting: "The Lord be with you." He also begins the prayer with

¹⁸ Boeser-Canon, *The Mass-Liturgy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1932).

¹⁹ The word, it will be observed, means "after Communion."

²⁰ Parsch-Eckhoff, *op. cit.*

“Let us pray” and the minister or server, representing the people, makes the response “Amen.”

The Postcommunion is a variable part of the Mass and combines the petition for enduring fruits of Communion with an allusion to the liturgical season or feast day. In literary style it resembles very much the Collect and the Secret. One cannot help observing how brief is this official thanksgiving. This seems the more remarkable when one considers the length of the preparatory prayers. This very brevity, however, should teach us an important lesson, namely that our whole lives should be spent in “giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph. 5:20).

Postcommunion

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we may grasp with minds quickened and cleansed the most holy mystery of the Transfiguration of Thy Son which we keep with solemn festival. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.

Response: Amen.

The Conclusion

We have now come to the conclusion of the Mass. In olden times the service was brought to a close by a formal dismissal from the deacon. “Ite missa est” (Go, it is the dismissal) was the phrase used. It happens, however, that the Blessing and the Last Gospel are today recited afterward. This indeed seems strange, two parts of the Mass occurring after the dismissal. But the Blessing was for a long time given privately after the Mass; so also was the Last Gospel read. And in the sixteenth century these were made part of the Mass itself even as were “The Prayers at the Foot of the Altar,” at the beginning of the Mass. But the dismissal still remained as formerly, after the Postcommunion.

At a number of Masses²¹ the *Gloria* of the Mass of the Catechu-

²¹ Advent, Lenten, Vigil, Ember Day Masses, and votive Masses said by choice of the celebrant in place of the Mass of the day.



The priest blesses the congregation with the Sign of the Cross
at the end of Mass.

mens is omitted and then in place of "Ite missa est" the phrase "Benedicamus Domino" (Let us bless the Lord) is used, the priest facing the altar while saying it. The response in either case, however, is "Deo Gratias" (Thanks be to God), a joyous acclamation of the Faithful for the graces received at the Mass.

Perhaps the reason for omitting "Ite missa est" in certain Masses is that it possesses a solemnity that would be inappropriate at any but Sunday and feast day Masses.²² Other liturgists, however, believe that the phrase is not used at Lenten Mass simply because formerly during Lent the congregation *did not leave* the church at the end of Mass but *remained afterward* to take part in a portion of the Divine Office (Vespers).

In Requiem Masses instead of "Ite missa est" or "Benedicamus Domino" the phrase used is "Requiescant in Pace" (May they rest in peace). The response is "Amen." Before all three forms the priest kisses the altar and conveys to the people the liturgical greeting "The Lord be with you."

The Blessing²³ follows, preceded by a prayer recited in a very low tone:

May the homage of my service be pleasing to Thee, O holy Trinity, and grant that the sacrifice which I, though unworthy, have offered in the sight of Thy majesty, may be acceptable to Thee, and through Thy mercy obtain forgiveness for me and for all those for whom I have offered it. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Having kissed the altar, the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the congregation and pronounces the words of the Blessing: "May almighty God bless you, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," to which the response "Amen" is made. At a bishop's Mass the form of blessing is somewhat longer and more solemn.

In the earlier centuries the celebrant gave his blessing after leaving the altar, a custom which gave rise to our present Blessing in the Mass.

In the Middle Ages, the custom began for the priest or bishop who celebrated Mass to recite the prologue of St. John's Gospel as a thanksgiving after Mass. Like the blessing, it also was said after the celebrant had left the altar. And it is still, sometimes, said by a bishop after leaving the altar for his throne. But when

²² Parsch-Eckhoff, *op. cit.*

²³ In Requiem Masses the Blessing is not given.

a priest celebrates Mass it is always said at the altar. This prologue when recited at the end of Mass is known as the Last Gospel of the Mass.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

Priest: The beginning of the Gospel according to St. John.

Response: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing that has been made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not.

There was a man, one sent from God, whose name was John.

This man came as a witness, to bear witness concerning the light, that all might believe through him.

He was not himself the light, but was to bear witness to the light.

It was the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, he gave the power of becoming sons of God, to those who believe in his name.

We were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory, glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and of truth.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Although the Last Gospel is now part of the Mass itself, it still possesses something of the character of a thanksgiving prayer after Mass. For it is said without solemnity and is never sung at chanted Mass. Occasionally another Gospel selection is read in place of the above verses.

Although in the early Church the Mass ended with the formal dismissal by the deacon, the recital of the above prologue seems to be a most fitting conclusion to the service. It is as if by these words, those who have participated in the Mass would restore to the Eternal Word the outward glory of which He divested Himself in order to become the Victim in the great sacrifice of the New Law.²⁴

²⁴ De Puniet, *The Mass, Its Origin and History*.

PART THREE

LIVING THE MASS

We have now, we hope, given the reader a general idea of the Mass. We have indicated how it is a sacrifice and shown in what way it is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross, pointing out also that it is the will of God that this sacrifice be offered to the end of time.

The Mass-liturgy, too, has been discussed at some length. We have seen how the Liturgy of the Catechumens, a separate prayer service in the early days of the Church, is now a part of the Mass itself. Comprising prayers and instructions (the latter of which is composed chiefly of biblical readings), the liturgy of the Catechumens is an introduction to the Mass of the Faithful, or the actual Eucharistic sacrifice, which is made up of the Offertory, Consecration, and Communion.

The spirit with which one should assist at Mass has also been briefly discussed. But this undoubtedly is a subject of such vital importance as to merit some additional consideration. To appreciate the spirit with which one should take part in the Mass, two things should be remembered. First, one should bear in mind that the Mass is a renewal of Christ's death and resurrection and, second, that a Christian in the state of grace enjoys a certain union with Jesus Christ which finds its logical expression in the celebration of the Mass. By this is meant that when the Redeemer renews His death and resurrection in the Mass, the Christian, because of his union with Him, should in spirit sacrifice himself and receive the pledge of his glorious resurrection. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:55).

To accomplish this the Christian attending Mass should offer himself in the manner explained in the Offertory. This will mean he must banish from his heart, as much as possible, all sinful inclinations and attachments. For God and His love must now come first in his life and there will be no room, therefore, for hatred, envy, or strife.

At the Consecration together with the divine Victim he will become spiritually sacrificed to the heavenly Father. And in the Communion he will receive the pledge of everlasting life. For the sacrament of the Eucharist is the "bread that comes down from heaven, so that if anyone eat of it he will not die" (John 6:50). He, indeed, obtains the sign of God's friendship, for he receives the body, blood, soul, and divinity of His Son.

As the human body must have food that it may possess health and strength, so also the Christian needs this spiritual nourishment in order to have supernatural health and vigor upon this earth and be able to enjoy God in heaven. And, need we add, when Mass is over he should live free from sin; for otherwise he will lose God's friendship which he values above all else. Thus he becomes an excellent member of society.

Society on the other hand is immensely benefited, when its members in this way are leading a truly Christian life, for society itself may then be described as Christian. Nor should we forget that the Mass itself is an essentially social act. This fact the early Christians understood well, for they knew the holy sacrifice as the "breaking of Bread." Moreover, in our study of the Mass-liturgy we saw how in the Communion especially the corporate nature of the Mass is revealed. For all "sit at the same table" to partake of the same spiritual refreshment. The rich kneel with the poor, the learned with the illiterate. Barriers of race and color break down, for they are all one in Christ—"there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Indeed, the bread that has become the body and blood of Christ signified such union. For is it not made from flour which is obtained by gathering many grains of wheat?

Thus the most remarkable kind of unity—that of unity in Christ—is achieved by the Mass. Through it the individual is made holy and the process of sanctification extends to all mankind in proportion to the extent each accepts and participates in this holy sacrifice.

It is therefore always vitally important that men should recognize the truth regarding the Mass. But it is especially so today and indeed for their own sakes. For there is now much confused thinking regarding God and religion by some who have become

learned in purely secular branches of education. Thus there already exists an unenlightened immoral type of leadership in the affairs of the world. This is to be observed in certain forms of political philosophy advocated in recent years which are clearly at variance with the teachings of Christ and sometimes openly opposed to belief in God. Their sanguine, often fanatical, disciples declare that if put in practice their systems will supply the much desired formula by which the ills of this world will speedily become remedied and in time a Utopian state of society everywhere established.

But especially in these critical days of war we shall do well to remember that such systems of necessity cannot provide the means by which to bind up the wounds of nations when the present great conflict is over and establish the kind of society the Creator intended. For, to accomplish such tasks, it may be said a divine plan already exists. It was given by the Saviour the night before He dyed the wood of His cross with His blood, becoming a sacrifice in order to render glory to God and redeem the human race from the bondage of sin. AND THIS DIVINE PLAN IS FOLLOWED WHEN WE ACCEPT AND LIVE THE MASS.



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