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HANDBOOK FOR CONVERTS

BOOKS



Rev. Anthony F. Bullen

ABOUT THIS BOOK

THIS is a brief manual designed as an aid for both convert and priest during the course of doctrinal instructions, also for those who have been in the Catholic Church for some time but feel they have only partly assimilated Catholic doctrine this may be a useful summary to restudy their Faith.

A HANDBOOK FOR CONVERTS

*An Outline Statement of the Catholic Faith :
Its Doctrine and Practice*

by

ANTHONY F. BULLEN



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INTRODUCTION

This book is designed as an aid for both convert and priest during the course of instructions. An aid for the convert, in that he will be enabled to review his last lesson at his own convenience, and make a preliminary acquaintance with the subject matter of the next. An aid for the priest (or instructor) in the hope that he may find the headings and points useful, at-a-glance reminders of the ground he has to cover and the direction in which he might logically cover it. The development of the points is deliberately brief in order to leave the instructor plenty of scope to deal with them as he thinks fit. For in most cases, a convert "catches" the Faith, under the influence of Grace, from the person who instructs and not from a book. It is essential therefore that the instructor be allowed the greatest freedom to expound the Faith in his own individual way; the notes accompanying the headings and points are thus intended primarily for the benefit of the convert.

It is obvious that a brief manual such as this cannot claim to give a complete account of the Faith even in summary form. So, for instance, the evidence proving that all Catholic doctrine has its basis in the Bible and Tradition is almost completely omitted. The accent is rather on an unproven statement of the Faith with emphasis, in the latter part of the book, on the practice of Catholicism.

It is also hoped that the Glossary may remove some of the bewilderment which assails a convert in his first few months as a Catholic. We all take for granted as intelligible such phrases as "Novena", "Retreat", "Quarant Ore". The convert finds them annoyingly unintelligible.

Finally, it is possible that not only converts actually undergoing instruction, but also those who have for some



time been received into the Church but feel they have only partly assimilated Catholic doctrine may find this handbook useful in the restudy of their Faith. For that matter, it is conceivable that some who were brought up as Catholics may include themselves in the last category.

I would like to express my thanks to those who have assisted me in the preparation of this book.

March 5th, 1955,
St. Mary's,
Woolton,
Liverpool.



PREFACE FOR CONVERTS

When you are half-way through your course of instructions it is probable that, like many converts before you, you will make this complaint to the priest: "Why wasn't I told all this before? It's all so very reasonable."

At the present stage, however, before you have begun, or even after two or three instructions, your attitude is different. It would be unusual if you were not a little nervous. Most converts-to-be feel that way at the beginning. The reason is this: they imagine that once they have rung the bell at the priest's house and asked for instructions, they have done something irrevocable, set something in motion which they cannot stop, that they are henceforward destined to be Catholics for the rest of their lives, whether they like it or not.

Let me assure you that this is not so. A priest will never force a prospective convert to become a Catholic. In fact, you will discover he has quite the opposite attitude; he will not allow you to be a Catholic unless he is sure that you are satisfied with the claims of the Catholic Church. You will be perfectly free, at any time, even at the end of the instructions, to tell him that you would, after all, prefer to remain a non-Catholic. He will not be annoyed; he will admire your honesty.

At the moment, you may have difficulties over certain parts of Catholic doctrine. Maybe you are bothered over confession, or statues, or infallibility, or Our Lady. Be sure to mention your difficulties to the priest. He much prefers a convert who will fire questions at him and argue than one who sits quiet, mutely assenting to everything he is told. If you don't understand something he tells you, say so. If you are not satisfied with the evidence he gives for the truth of a doctrine, let him know.

Although your interested attention during the instructions is most necessary, even so, in order of importance, it

takes second place to prayer. You must pray that God will show you His truth and that He will show you clearly what He wants you to do and help you to do it. If you are unfamiliar with the practice of prayer and don't know how to set about it, simply say (perhaps in the church a minute or two before the instruction is due to begin): "O my God, show me the truth. Tell me what You want me to do and help me to do it."

People sometimes speak of converts as having "changed their religion". You will soon discover it to be very much more than that. You will find yourself starting a new life, a much happier, more contented one. Your only regret will be that you didn't start it years earlier.

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CHAPTER ONE

ABOUT GOD, OURSELVES, AND OUR RELATION TO GOD

A. GOD EXISTS

We know that God exists. Here are three ways in which human reason can conclude that there is a God.

1. **There must be a First Cause.** Everything in the world depends for its being on something or someone else. The chair on which you sit depended for its existence on a joiner. He in turn did not cause himself; he has to thank his parents for his life; they in their turn owe their existence to their parents and so on. It would be as ridiculous to think that one could keep on going back without finally coming to a First Cause, God, not dependent on anyone else, as it would be to think, while standing on top of a sky-scraper, that the numerous floors beneath you never reached a foundation.

2. **The law of conscience.** A person knows instinctively that if he does certain things, if, for example, he steals, if he is cruel, he is doing wrong. He doesn't need a tutor to tell him what is right and wrong. He knows automatically, for he has within him certain laws which he knows ought to be obeyed. If there is a law there must be a law-giver: God.

3. **The order in the Universe.** If you leave a jumbled jig-saw puzzle in the house and return later to find it assembled perfectly, you don't attribute this effect to your dog. You know that someone, a person with intelligence, has been there while you were absent. In our own bodies, in nature, and in the solar system, we find everywhere

order and harmony of parts. The structure of the human eye, perfect to the tiniest detail, the seasonal migration of birds, the ability to predict the movements of stars, all this order is not the result of blind chance. It points with certainty to an Intelligent Creator: God.

B. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GOD

From Reason

From the first proof (above) that God is the First Cause, we know that there is none greater than God. He is infinite in Himself. He is without limit. Since a body limits a person to a particular place, we know that God has no body. He is a spirit. He is everywhere.

Any good qualities we see in people around us have come originally from God.

Intelligence—He knows everything.

Power—He can do anything. He is Almighty.

Beauty, Truth, Justice, Mercy, Love—we see these good qualities in a limited way in others. We say they possess good qualities. God has them as the source without limit: He is them.

C. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OURSELVES

1. **We have a spiritual soul.** This it is which makes us distinct from the animals. Because it is spiritual, it makes us, in a sense, like God. We know we have a soul because we are able to think of abstract ideas, (e.g. truth, humanity, justice), ideas which a material organ such as the brain is incapable of producing or containing.

2. **Our soul is immortal**—it will never die. How could it? Only the body can catch a germ, be affected by old age. The soul, because it is spiritual, is immune to such physical change. Since the body will one day certainly die, whereas the soul will certainly not, it is obvious that the soul has first claim on our concern. "What does it

profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

3. **We have free-will** to choose this or that, to act or not act, to read this book or put it aside. Most important of all, we are able to choose with this God-given faculty, whether we will serve Him or not. God will not force us.

4. **We have a purpose in life**: "to know, love and serve God in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next." God created us for no other purpose than that. Think of the various ambitions that drive men onwards: fame, money, love, power, comfort, security. Think also of the disappointment that drives them desperately on still further in the vain hope that the possession of still more of the object they desire will satisfy their longing and give them peace.

If you use a machine for the wrong purpose disaster will result. If, for example, you use a vacuum cleaner to wash dishes, you will wreck the cleaner. If a man uses himself for the wrong purpose, he will certainly be unhappy and discontented.

We are on this earth for one purpose—to know, love and serve God.

Not to do that means, sooner or later, frustration and dissatisfaction.

To do that means happiness.

5. **Religion is necessary**, therefore, because it is religion that regulates our relationship with God. You can compare religion to the handbook a buyer receives when he takes delivery of a new car: it tells him how he must treat the car to get the best results. If he disregards the handbook, he will soon be complaining, unjustifiably, to the makers. In the same way, if a person is silly enough to dismiss religion as a hobby for those with leisure, or a pious fad for a few, he too will soon have reason to wonder why life seems so unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER TWO

PRAYING

If you are already in the habit of praying regularly, you will learn little from this chapter. If, on the other hand, you have prayed, either not at all, or only in rare moments of crisis, then you will find it worth while to study the following paragraphs carefully.

What prayer is. It is the raising up of the mind and heart to God. It is talking to, and with, God, sometimes in words spoken aloud, sometimes in unspoken words, sometimes only in wordless "glances" towards God.

Prayer is necessary if we wish to be saved, because only by prayer do we dispose ourselves for God's action on us. It is certain that an adult who knows of God and his obligations towards God, yet does not pray at all, cannot be saved.

What we can say to God. Many people think that praying means simply asking God for things: "Please, God, get me out of this scrape, help me to get a job, recover from this illness . . ." and so on. This prayer of petition is good for it indirectly expresses our dependence on God, and that is why God, to encourage us to pray and keep in contact with Himself, very often gives us things as a result of our prayers.

However, it is selfish only to ask God for what we want. We should also tell Him that we adore Him (that is expressing our dependence on Him directly), that we love Him, (or at least want to love Him). We should thank Him for all He has done for us; we should tell Him we are sorry for our sins.

When to pray. It is good for a person to have regular times for prayer, otherwise he would only pray when he felt like it. It is wise, therefore, to begin and end the day with prayer. (A suggestion as to precisely which prayers might be said, morning and evening, is given below.)

Don't imagine, however, that your daily prayers need be limited to those two occasions. It isn't necessary for you to be kneeling with hands joined and eyes closed, to pray. You can say short (mental) prayers at any time—on the bus, in the cinema queue, at your job. No time is the wrong time for prayer.

Praying is difficult at most times, because

- (a) You cannot see the Person to whom you are speaking, and it is largely a one-sided conversation.
- (b) It demands concentration, and that is never easy.
- (c) Boredom and weariness may assail you when you start to pray.

Some hints

- (a) Mean what you say. A parrot can be taught to recite prayers but he is not praying. A person can recite prayers, but if he does not mean what he says, he is not praying.
- (b) Prayers you make up yourself in your own words, since it is likely they will be more sincere, are in a way better than prayers you say from memory or read from a book. The exception to this is the official prayer of the Church, e.g., the prayers at Mass, called the Liturgy. When you join your voice to this prayer, you are joining yourself to a chorus many millions strong.
- (c) God does not expect these prayers of your own to be long-winded, formal, and full of fancy phrases. Be simple and direct.

- (d) Quality is more important than quantity.
- (e) If you find your prayers wearisome and full of distractions, don't be discouraged. As long as you are sincerely trying, that prayer is quite as good, if not better, than the prayer of a person who finds it easy and pleasant. Remember, you pray not to please and satisfy yourself, (although you will always feel better after praying), but to please and honour God.
- (f) Catholics often begin their prayers by making the Sign of the Cross: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." (The priest will show you what action to do while you say these words.) We find it helpful as a reminder of the fact that we are about to address Almighty God, not a thing to be undertaken lightly, and that He is aware of every word we say to Him in prayer.

Some prayers to remember

"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, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

("Hallowed" means praised. "Trespass" means sin.)

"Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

(There is an explanation towards the end of the book of why we pray to Our Lady.)

"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."

For a start, the above three prayers could be said in the morning. Add the following prayer, and you have a useful form of night prayers. Say them very slowly and thoughtfully.

"O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins. I detest them above all things because they deserve Thy dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, and most of all, because they offend Thine infinite Goodness. And I firmly resolve, by the help of Thy Grace, never to offend Thee again and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin."

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREED—WHAT TO BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION

What is Faith ?

- (a) *Human Faith* means taking someone's word for a thing. If a policeman stops you on your way home with the alarming news that your house is burning, you believe the information he gives you. Not to believe him would be foolish, because, generally speaking, a policeman can be relied upon not to deceive you.
- (b) *Religious Faith* means believing whatever God has said. Not to believe what God tells us would be foolish indeed, for God is Truth Itself who would not and could not be guilty of deceit. Faith, then, is a supernatural (i.e. beyond our human powers) gift of God (i.e. something no man can claim as a right) by which we believe without doubting whatever God has revealed (i.e. told us).

How to know what God has revealed. No sane person would refuse to believe God's word, once he was sure that it really was God's word and not simply concocted by human beings many years ago. Here, step by step, is the method by which we are able to conclude as to precisely what truths God has told us and offered to us for our belief.

- (i) We prove that the Gospels are true and authentic documents written by men who were utterly reliable.

- (ii) In the Gospels it is clear that this Person of whom they write, Jesus Christ, claims to be God, and proves this claim convincingly.
- (iii) Before He left this earth, He established a Church which He guaranteed would teach His word to all men for all time.
- (iv) We are able to prove that this Church is the Catholic Church.
- (v) Therefore we can conclude that whatever this Church tells us is in fact the word of God.

Each of these steps will be dealt with in its own place in the following analysis and explanation of the Creed.

* * *

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

* * *

A. "GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY . . ."

1. **Three persons in God.** There are three Persons in God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. (The word "Ghost" is not used in its modern sense; it means simply "Spirit"). There are not three Gods. There is one God. This is called the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. A mystery is something which is beyond, but not against,

reason. It is not surprising that there are limits to our knowledge of God. It would be remarkable if we understood everything about Him, His nature, His dealings with men. For God is not to be thought of as simply a much greater Being than ourselves, but as an infinite Being beyond the complete grasp of our finite minds.

In this mystery of His Personality, we understand only a little. Our human experience is limited to a knowledge of one human nature linked to one person. We believe on the word of Jesus Christ that God's one Divine Nature demands three persons.

There are bound to be many mysteries, many truths, of which we have only a partial understanding. For instance, the following two paragraphs on suffering and creation present two further mysteries: Why does God allow suffering? Why did God, who needs nothing and no one, create at all?

2. **The problem of pain** can be stated thus: If God is Almighty (i.e. can do anything) and if He is our Father, why does He let us suffer? The following points give a partial answer to the question.

(a) *God does not inflict suffering* because He is good and He loves us.

(b) *He does allow suffering*, but always and only for our good, although we may often find it difficult to understand how this is so. For example, He may allow it so that we will not become too attached to this world (which is only a temporary halt on the way to Eternity), and thus forgetful of Him, endanger our Salvation.

(c) *He gave men free-will*, a gift which enables them to be kind to their neighbour or to be cruel. It would make this gift a farce if, each time He foresaw its misuse, He were to withdraw it.

- (d) *Jesus Christ accepted suffering* as the way to make up for our sins. He was innocent; we are guilty. Why should He be alone in His suffering?

It is easy to write about suffering, and easy to pity others their sorrows. It is never easy to resign oneself to suffering and sorrow.

3. **Creator.** Creation means making something out of nothing. A joiner does not create a table: he makes it out of wood. Scientists say that the matter of this universe is thousands of millions of years old. They do not claim that it is eternal. Creation alone answers the question, "How did it come into being?"

4. **Of Heaven and Earth.** The beginning of the world is described in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. This account is not written as a scientific treatise for geologists; it is poetry and has to be understood as such. These are the facts of creation:

God first created pure spirits—the angels. Of these, some rejected God and chose to "reign in Hell" as devils rather than "serve in Heaven". God then created the world and the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, who were tempted by the devil to disobey God. This first sin is called "Original sin" (about which more will be said later) and because the whole human race is descended from Adam and Eve, that sin was not only personal to them: in that act of rebellion against God, all men rebelled.

B. "JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON . . ."

1. **The Incarnation** is the term given to the tremendous fact that God the Son became a man. The name given to this Person is "Jesus Christ". "Jesus" means "Saviour" and expresses the purpose of His becoming a man, to save us from eternal damnation. "Christ" means "Anointed" (i.e., signed with oil), and since kings

and priests were anointed, this title "Christ" implies that He is both King and Priest.

We speak of God the Son made man sometimes as "Jesus", sometimes as "Jesus Christ", most often simply as "Our Lord".

2. How we know of the Incarnation. How do we know of any historical fact, e.g., the Battle of Waterloo? From the books, letters and memoirs written on the subject by the people who lived at the time of the event. In that same way we know of Jesus Christ, His birth, His life, His death, His Resurrection. He is mentioned in many books, but the chief and official biography is presented in the four Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books are inspired by God, but in the following paragraph we briefly examine them simply as historical documents.

3. The Gospels are true. There are many reasons which compel our belief in the Gospels as wholly true and authentic versions of Our Lord's life. We give five here:

- (a) Our Lord died about the year 30 A.D., and three of the four Gospels were in circulation before 70 A.D. In the space of that time many people were still living who knew of the places, people and events of which the authors wrote, and who could and would have disputed the contents of the books had they been false.
- (b) The men who wrote the Gospels stood to gain nothing by what they wrote. Rather the opposite, as they could expect only suffering and death for publishing the facts they knew.
- (c) The apparent and occasional discrepancies between the four accounts rule out the possibility of their authors acting together to launch a hoax on the world.
- (d) Many of the facts described in the Gospels are

confirmed by contemporary pagan historians such as Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus.

(e) Rigorous and unceasing research into geographical, political, social and religious detail of the time of Our Lord—and many of these details, lost at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., have only been discovered recently—has failed to reveal the least error or inaccuracy in the Gospels.

4. **Jesus Christ claimed to be God.** This claim is made either directly or indirectly on many pages of the Gospel. "All authority in heaven and earth is given to me." (Mt. 28, 18.) "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt. 16, 15,) said Peter to Our Lord, and He did not deny this declaration. He "spoke of God as His Father thereby treating Himself as equal to God". (Jn. 5, 18.) "All may reverence the Son as they reverence the Father," He said of Himself. (Jn. 5, 23.) When He was on trial for the claim He made, fully aware of the death penalty that would be exacted if He clung to it, He was asked by the high priest: "'I adjure Thee by the living God to tell us whether Thou art Christ, the Son of God?' Jesus answered, 'Thy own lips have said it. And moreover, I tell you this: you will see the Son of Man again, when He is seated at the right hand of God's power and comes on the clouds of Heaven.' At this, the high priest tore his garments and said, 'He has blasphemed!'" (Mt. 26, 63.)

5. His claim is proved true

(a) *By His miracles.* Miracles are extraordinary events which can be ascribed only to God. The Gospels relate many such events: the instantaneous healing of people suffering from incurable diseases, the raising to life of the dead. God would not lend such power to a man whose claim was false.

- (b) *By His Resurrection from the dead.* He had foretold the manner of His death; He had foretold that three days later He would be alive again. Despite this prophecy, His close friends thought, when He died, that they had seen the last of their Master. They did not expect to see Him again and so we cannot conclude that they imagined it. Moreover, an hallucination, (and to imagine this Resurrection would have been such), is not shared by many people for over a month, the length of time Our Lord stayed with His friends after the Resurrection. Furthermore, among those who believed He was alive again were many of the priests who had agitated for His death. This new belief of theirs demanded that they should admit their complicity in His murder and exchange a life of comparative ease and security for one of hardship, poverty and the likelihood of execution.
- (c) *By the rapid spread of Christianity.* Within forty years of Our Lord's death in despised Palestine, Tacitus, the pagan historian, wrote that in sophisticated and sceptical Rome "a vast multitude" of Christians were put to death for their Faith. Would that have been possible if Jesus Christ had been no more than a trouble-maker as the Jewish rulers claimed? Would it have been possible even if He were no more than a holy man unjustly executed? Since the time of Christ, billions of people have revered Him as God and the number still grows, year by year. Are we to believe that this is all the result of a hoax, a practical joke, initiated by a small group of uneducated men?
- (d) *By the testimony of those who disbelieve in His Divinity.* Such people agree as to the moral excellence of His life and His teaching, and in so doing create for themselves this insoluble

dilemma: either Jesus was under the mistaken impression He was God, that He was, in other words, a deluded fool; or else, knowing He was not God, He deceived others into thinking He was, that in fact He was a liar. You cannot say that Jesus was simply a good man. You must maintain He was either a fool or a liar, or, if you admire Him, you are compelled to say He must indeed have been God.

6. Why God became man

(a) *To save us.* If you destroy a priceless work of art, you will not placate the public by expressing your willingness to produce a replica, for it is beyond your powers to do so. In the same way it was beyond the power of any mere man to make up to God for the offence of Adam and Eve, which, because it was an offence against an Infinite Being, had something of Infinity in it. God the Son became a man because, as God, He was capable of making infinite atonement; as man, He could stand as representative of the human race.

(b) *To teach us* about His Father, the Holy Spirit, Himself, God's bewildering love for men, the love that men should have for God and for each other, the way to live, what to expect after death.

(c) *To be an example for us.* In His hidden life as a joiner's assistant, in His dealings with men, and most of all, in His sufferings, we can look to Him as a pattern according to which we can weave our whole life, day by day.

7. **The Life of Our Lord.** It is impossible in such a short space as this to give more than the barest outline. Even the Gospels are not complete, for St. John admits at the conclusion of his account: "There is much else that

Jesus did; if all of it were put in writing, I do not think the world itself would contain the books which would have to be written." Many books have indeed been written about Our Lord, but they all depend on the Gospels, and one cannot exaggerate the vital importance to every man of reading the Gospels for himself.

Our Lord's life falls into four main periods: His Hidden Life, His Public Life, His Passion, His Triumph.

(a) *The Hidden Life* covers those years before He publicly revealed Himself as the Messiah.

(i) The Annunciation. His mother-to-be, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, a joiner, and lived in Nazareth, a forgotten village in an obscure part of Palestine. Despite her coming marriage, she and Joseph had dedicated their virginity to God. She was therefore non-plussed when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her with the request that she be the mother of God. "How can that be," she asked, "since I have no knowledge of man?" The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the most High will overshadow thee. Thus this holy offspring of thine shall be known for the Son of God." (Luke 1, 26-38.)

(ii) The Visitation. Part of the message given to Mary by the Angel was that her Cousin Elizabeth was also to have a child, John the Baptist, destined to be the forerunner of Our Lord. Mary, now miraculously with-child, immediately left her home and went to help Elizabeth in her confinement. Elizabeth recognized Mary's new dignity and greeted her: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." (Luke 1, 39-45.)

(iii) The Nativity. Shortly before her Child was due to be born, Mary and Joseph were

forced to make the journey to Bethlehem in order to comply with an edict of the Roman Emperor. When they reached the town, they discovered that there was no room for them in any of the lodgings, and had to seek refuge in a cattle shelter. Here was the Child born. A chorus of angels seen by shepherds welcomed His birth, and He was worshipped by three kings from the East. (Luke 2, 1-20.)

(iv) The Presentation. It was customary among the Jews to present the first-born son to God in the Temple. When Mary and Joseph went to perform this rite, the Child they carried was hailed by Simeon and Anna as the Messiah. Meanwhile Herod, a tyrant who ruled the Jews under the protection of the Romans, sought the life of this Boy whom he had heard was eventually to be King. His parents took Jesus and fled to Egypt, and returned to Nazareth only when Herod was dead. (Luke 2, 21-36.)

(v) The Finding of Jesus in the Temple. For thirty years Jesus, God-made-man, lived in a humble home helping His mother and foster-father. The finding in the Temple is the only event to break the silence of these hidden years. When He was twelve, Jesus, Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast, the Pasch. On their return, Mary and Joseph, who had been travelling separately, discovered that their Child was missing. They went back to Jerusalem and after three days found Him discoursing with the Rabbis in the Temple. The reply He made to His parents' complaint is full of mystery: "What reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell

that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?" (Luke 3, 40-52.)

(b) *The Public Life.* At the beginning of His public life, Our Lord did not reveal Himself as God. Had He done so, people would either have disowned Him as mad, or if they had believed Him, such was the exalted idea the Jews had of God, they would never have dared approach Him.

He chose twelve close friends, Apostles, of whom He made Peter the leader. With these simple men who had abandoned their livelihood to follow Him, He moved from town to town preaching and healing. As the months went by, He attracted an increasing number of ardent followers, men, women and children, who at times became so engrossed by what He said and did, that they were oblivious of their daily needs. As His popularity increased, so also did the jealous hostility of the national religious leaders, Scribes and Pharisees. "Look," they said, "the whole world has turned aside to follow Him." (Jn. 12, 19.) They decided He must die if their positions of authority were not to be brushed aside.

(c) *The Passion and Death.*

(i) *The Agony in the Garden.* On the day before He died, Our Lord made a farewell and ritual meal with His friends, and at it, one of His Apostles, Judas, his worldly ambitions shattered, decided to betray his Master. In the Garden of Gethsemani, late that same evening, Our Lord endured such mental anguish at the thought of His impending suffering, His betrayal by Judas and by all men of every age and nation in their sins, that His perspiration became as drops of

blood and He prayed, "Let this chalice" (suffering) "pass from me," but immediately added, "Yet not my will but thine be done." Judas headed the rabble come to arrest Him and pointed Him out by embracing Him. The Apostles fled and left their Lord to be taken for trial. (Mt. 26, 36-57.)

(ii) The Scourging. The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, alone had power to sign a death warrant. As Our Lord's trial proceeded before this man, he perceived two things: that Jesus was innocent, and that the priests did not intend to let Him escape. He did not want to pass sentence of death on an innocent man, nor did he want to annoy his Jewish subjects. He tried to compromise by ordering that Our Lord be whipped. Jesus was stripped, His hands tied to a pillar and the scourging began. Very soon Our Lord was standing in a pool of His own Blood. No part of His Body escaped the lash. (Luke 23, 13-17.)

(iii) The Crowning with thorns. When the scourging was finished, the Roman soldiers began to "play" with their Victim. Having put a scarlet cloak around Him—a sign of kingship—a reed in His hand for a sceptre, a crown made of thorns on His head, they knelt before Him and in mockery said, "Hail, King of the Jews." (Mark 15, 16-20.)

(iv) The Carrying of the Cross. The crowd, now much bigger and agitated to a frantic pitch by the priests, chanted continuously together, "Crucify Him," and in fear, Pilate signed the death warrant. Our Lord carried the Cross on which He was to die the two-thirds of a mile between Pilate's palace and Mount Calvary. Tradition has it that on

this journey He fell three times through weakness, and that He met His Mother.

(v) **The Crucifixion and Death.** Stripped once more of His clothes, His hands and feet were nailed to the Cross. Beneath the Cross stood His Mother, one of His Apostles, John, and a small group of sympathisers. In the three hours He hung there, He spoke seven times: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "This day you will be with me in Paradise." "Mother, behold thy Son; Son, behold thy mother." "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "I thirst." "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." "It is finished." At His death, the veil of the temple was split, darkness covered the earth, His enemies fled in terror and the Roman Guard was forced to admit, "No doubt, but this was the Son of God." (Mt. 27, 32-54.) His Body was buried in the vault of one of His followers.

Note:—Our Lord's sufferings need not have been so terrible. He chose this way to impress upon us the excess of love God has for men, to impress upon us the horror of our sins, which can be said to have helped crucify Him, and to be an example and inspiration to all who suffer.

(d) *The Triumph.*

(i) **The Resurrection.** Our Lord rose from the dead three days later (Easter Sunday.) Mary Magdalen saw Him in the garden of His burial. Later He came to the Apostles who at first were frightened, thinking He was a ghost. He reassured them by eating with them. "Then while they were still doubtful and bewildered with joy, He asked them,

'Have you anything here to eat?' so they put before Him a piece of roast fish and a honeycomb and He took these and ate in their presence." On this occasion Thomas was missing and afterwards declared that until he could touch Our Lord's wounds, he would not believe. A week later, Our Lord came to them again and asked Thomas, "Let me have thy hand, put it into my side." Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God." (Jn. 20, 27.)

- (ii) **The Ascension.** For forty days Our Lord stayed with His Apostles instructing them. Their last instruction took place on a mountain peak in Galilee: "'Go out all over the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole of creation; he who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who refuses belief will be condemned' . . . and so the Lord Jesus, when He had finished speaking to them was taken up to Heaven and is seated now at the right hand of God; and they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord aiding them and attesting His word by the miracles that went with them." (Mark 16, 15-20.)

C. THE HOLY GHOST

1. **Who He is.** The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son and proceeding from them. Our Lord spoke of Him as the "Paraclete", a word which means an advocate or adviser, and promised that He would come to the Church.

2. **The Work of the Holy Ghost in the Church.** After Our Lord's Ascension, the Apostles returned to the upper room which they had made their headquarters and there

they prayed together waiting for the promised Paraclete. Ten days later, on what we now call Whit Sunday or Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came. "Then appeared to them what seemed to be tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in strange languages, as the Spirit gave utterance to each. Among those dwelling in Jerusalem at this time were devout Jews from every country under heaven; so when noise of this went abroad the crowd which gathered was in bewilderment; each man severally heard them speak in his own language." (Acts 2, 3-6.)

The miracle of languages is not so astounding as the result of the first day's preaching, when three thousand people were converted to Christianity. For this reason we regard Whit Sunday as the day on which the Church was born. The work of the Holy Ghost did not end there. As we shall see, He is still with the Church.

3. The Action of the Holy Ghost on Individuals

- (a) The prophets of the Old Testament, Isaias and Jeremias and others who wrote about Our Lord many hundreds of years before He was born, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.
- (b) The Holy Spirit "overshadowed" Our Lady at the Annunciation so that her Child was indeed the Son of God and not the Son of any earthly father.
- (c) In the Sacrament of Confirmation, which will be dealt with later, the Holy Ghost is given to the recipient as a strengthening Guide—a true Paraclete.
- (d) Even apart from the Sacrament, the Holy Ghost works on individuals, helping them to resist temptation, inspiring them to good acts, aiding them in their prayers. His action, because it is so silent and hidden, is very often unacknowledged.

D. THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. **Jesus Christ established a Church**, a visible and organized society. This is obvious from many of Our Lord's sermons and parables. He sometimes used the word "Church"; most often, however, He spoke of it as a "Kingdom". "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell" (i.e. the powers of evil), "shall not prevail against it; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," (symbol of complete authority), "and whatever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." (Mt. 16, 17-20.) "If he will not listen to them, then speak of it to the Church, and even if he will not listen to the Church, then count him all one with the heathen and publican." (Mt. 18, 17.) He compared His Church-to-be with a kingdom and a city, both visible organized units of government and administration.

There are more than three hundred churches or sects which to-day claim to be the Church of Christ, but only one of those three hundred can in fact have been founded by Our Lord, for He spoke of only one and not several. The question therefore is: which of the three hundred is the Church of God? Before answering the question it may be helpful to deal with:—

2. Some Common Errors

- (a) "*Why bother about a particular Church? It doesn't matter much what a person believes as long as he is sincere.*" As a person believes, so he acts. To take an extreme example, Hitler sincerely believed that Germany was destined to rule the world and that he could use any means to achieve that end. Accordingly, he instituted Belsen and Dachau. It mattered greatly to the people who were exterminated in gas chambers what Hitler was sincere in believing. The follow-

ing is a less extreme example. A husband may sincerely believe that he is free to marry again, if he grows tired of his first wife. His belief matters greatly to her.

(b) "*Mr. So and So is an enthusiastic member of St. John's Church. I belong to none and go to none, yet I'm just as good as he is.*" The speaker should not judge other people because he is not qualified or capable. Only God knows how relatively good or bad people are. Nor does a person go to Church just to become good, but first of all to render a debt of service to God.

(c) "*It doesn't matter which Church you belong to, as long as you belong to one or other. We are all going the same way home, each in our own Church.*" Our destination—God—may be the same, but the question for every man to ask himself is this: Am I going along the road that Jesus Christ said I ought to take? There are many routes up the Matterhorn but only a fool would say they were all equally good, especially if an experienced guide were to advise one in particular. Our Lord told men to take one particular route in their journey towards His Father. It is up to each person to find out which route that is, which Church that is. Having found it, he must stick to it, since it is his one hope of safety.

3. **Which is the true Church?** The obvious way to find out which one of the many religions of to-day is the Church of Christ is (a) to examine the Gospels for Our Lord's description of His Church, and having established accurately what that description is, then (b) to compare the Churches in existence to-day with that description. Whichever corresponds completely must be the one true Church founded by Christ.

(a) *His Description of the Church.*

- (i) **United.** Our Lord prayed that His Church would be united. "It is not only for them" (His Apostles) "that I pray; I pray for those who are to find faith in me through their word; that they may all be one." (Jn. 17, 20.) His intention was that it would be "one fold, and one Shepherd". (Jn. 10, 16.) Speaking on another subject He said: "No city or household that is at war with itself can stand firm" (Mt. 12, 25.) We can be sure also that He did not intend His Church to be divided by dissensions and differences, but rather that it would be united in faith, in worship, in government.
- (ii) **Universal.** This is the meaning of the word "Catholic". Our Lord told His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations. (Mt. 28, 19.) He intended His Church to be international, not confined to one race, nation or group.
- (iii) **Apostolic.** Jesus appointed His Apostles to be His principal agents in starting the Church. He handed over to them the power of ruling and teaching. "He who listens to you, listens to me. He that despises you, despises me." (Luke 10, 16.) But He did not intend His Apostles to be independent of each other; He made Peter their leader when He said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." (Mt. 16, 18.) He later gave Peter the same commission in more figurative language when He ordered him to "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." (Jn. 21, 15-17.)
- (iv) **Holy.** His very purpose in becoming a man and founding a Church was to make men holy (i.e., lead them to the love and service of God.) He wanted His Church, therefore,

to offer to its members the means to achieve such holiness and it should be easily distinguishable by the actual saintliness of many of its members.

- (v) Guaranteed to teach the truth. If you admit that the Church of Jesus Christ can make mistakes then it follows firstly, that God has bound men under pain of damnation to believe what may be false: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who refuses belief will be condemned." (Mk. 16, 16;) secondly, that His prayer for the "truth-giving Spirit" (Jn. 14, 17) to be with His Apostles and their successors and teach them all He had told them, has failed; thirdly, that when Our Lord said, "I am with you" (the Church) "all days, even to the end of the world," He implied that God, Who is Truth, would associate Himself with a society that may be teaching falsehood.

(b) The Catholic Church alone fits the description given by Our Lord.

- (i) The Catholic Church is united. Catholics are united in loving loyalty to the Pope, in the way they worship God, in what they believe. Rich man or pauper, black or white, East or West, first century or twentieth, no matter what other differences, Catholics are one in their complete unity of belief.
- (ii) The Catholic Church alone is truly universal. There are nearly 500 million Catholics drawn from every race on the earth—more than all the other Christian religions put together. The number increases steadily. Converts to Catholicism include not only simple unlettered people, but the average, and most intellectual as well.

- (iii) The Catholic Church is holy. She puts before men the highest ideals, (often very difficult to attain), insists on the law of God when compromises would be easy and welcome to many, (e.g. God's laws regarding divorce and contraception.) The holiness of the Church is manifest in the heroic lives of so many of its members; very many dedicate their lives completely to the service of the unwanted and outcast. Many others have laid down their lives for Christ and are doing so at this moment in some part of the world. On a more average level, the Press has never given a report of a priest complaining of poor attendance at Sunday Mass. Our only complaint is that our churches are too small.

What about bad Catholics? There are plenty. But Our Lord foretold that this would be so. "Scandals will come," He said. He compared His Church to a net: it brings up not only good fish but bad; and a field of corn: it contains not only wheat but weeds. A doctor is not blamed for a patient who fails to get well, if he does not follow the doctor's advice. Nor should the Church be blamed for Catholics who are not carrying out her prescriptions for good living.

- (iv) The Catholic Church is Apostolic (i.e. descended from the Apostles). The present Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is descended in uninterrupted line from St. Peter, the first Pope, who received his commission to be head of the Church from Jesus Christ.
- (v) The Catholic Church alone guarantees the truth. The meaning of infallibility is no more than this: the Pope and the Church, when teaching in God's name what men

have to believe and do in order to reach Heaven, are prevented by God from falling into error. Only the Catholic Church makes this claim of infallibility.

In no other Church but the Catholic Church are all these claims substantiated. Therefore, the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of God. From this it follows that:

No Catholic can ever regard any but his own Church as true. While he admires many non-Catholics for their personal sanctity, he may not take part in their religious services. This often leads to bitter misunderstandings.

Although it is true that any man who sincerely follows his conscience in the service of God will be saved, for a person who knows that the Catholic Church is the Church of Christ, there is no possibility of salvation except in that Church.

Note on the Reformation. English people often suspect Catholicism as something foreign, whereas all Englishmen were Catholics until the sixteenth century. Catholics do not deny that abuses had crept into the Church and reforms were needed. But the reforms should have dealt with morals (how people behave) not with doctrine (what people believe.) Luther, the founder of Protestantism, confused the two and changed parts of the Faith that had been believed since the time of Our Lord. (For instance, he called the Mass an "idolatrous ceremony", denied the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the efficacy of some of the sacraments, etc.). Luther's movement coincided with King Henry's desire for divorce and remarriage, and as a result of the Pope's refusal to alter the law of God to suit Henry, the latter declared himself Head of the Church in England. He enlisted the support of the powerful aristocracy by giving them the lands which had belonged to the monasteries. Thus did the Protestant religion come to England.

One of Luther's doctrines was that each person should be his own infallible guide in the interpretation of the Bible. On account of this doctrine, Protestantism very soon became father to a vast number of sects, each in its turn claiming to have the correct interpretation of the Scriptures.

Note on "The Mystical Body of Christ". The Church is spoken of by St. Paul (Cor. I, 12, 12-30) as the Mystical Body of Christ. The word "mystical" is used to distinguish it from the physical Body of Our Lord. The Church is the Social Body of Christ spread over the world. Just as the members of a man's physical body depend on each other, live by the same life, and are nourished by the same sustenance, so also all those who together make up the Mystical Body of Christ depend on each other, live by the same life (of Grace), are fed by the same food (Holy Communion.)

It is not surprising therefore that the Church re-enacts through her members the Life of Our Lord: His Hidden Life by the thousands of monks and nuns whose lives of work and prayer are hidden from the world; His relief of suffering by the numerous Catholic Charities for the relief of poverty and disease; His love for His Mother, by the devotion the Church has always shown to Mary; His claim to forgive sins, repeated by the Church, and now as then non-Catholics protest. He offered Himself in sacrifice; the Church continues this act of sacrifice in the Mass. He was hounded to death by His enemies; not a year in her twenty centuries has passed, but the Church has been put to death in some part of the world, and just as surely as He rose again, so also has the Church risen again, unconquerable.

E. THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

This doctrine is liable to be misunderstood because the two words "Communion" and "Saints" are not used in their normal sense.

(a) "*Saints*" in this context is not limited to those

persons who have been canonised by the Church and have "St." before their names. The term covers all people living or dead, who are in a state of grace (discussed in Chapter 6) whether they are in Heaven, as members of the Church Triumphant; in Purgatory, as members of the Church Suffering; or on earth as members of the Church Militant.

- (b) "*Communion*" expresses the very close relationship between these three groups: the saints in Heaven able to assist us, and we here on earth able to ask from them and expect aid; the souls in Purgatory (called the "Holy Souls") suffering for their sins and dependent on us for our intercession to God on their behalf. Although we should often remember the Holy Souls in our prayers and sacrifices, nevertheless the Church focuses our attention on them in every Mass, and reminds us particularly of their need each November.

F. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

1. Sin

- (a) *What it is.* A sin is an offence against God, an act of disobedience against His parental authority, an insult hurled defiantly against the Infinite Creator by the finite creature. No sin can, therefore, be considered a trivial thing, no matter how small it may appear in our eyes. If we love someone and hurt him even accidentally, we are upset and anxious to apologize. Although God cannot suffer, our sins can be said to "hurt" Him, not accidentally but deliberately. If we love Him, our sins will upset us and make us hasten to offer Him our sincere sorrow.

(b) *Kinds of Sin.*

- (i) Original: the first sin committed by Adam and Eve which introduced suffering and

death into the world. Because the human race is descended from Adam and Eve, every person born into the world (with the exception of Our Lady) inherits the stain of this Sin, and, in addition, a wounded nature more prone to evil than to good.

(ii) **Mortal**: "Mortal" means death-giving. It is such a grievous offence against God that it kills the Life of Grace in the soul. A person commits a mortal sin if what he does is a grave matter, if he knows it is, and if he does it deliberately.

(iii) **Venial**: is a less serious sin. It does not kill the Life of Grace, nor can any number of venial sins add up to a mortal sin. However, a venial sin is not to be made light of, for it is still an offence against God, it weakens our resistance to temptation, and so can lead to mortal sin.

2. **Forgiveness** and the conditions on our part to merit God's pardon will be treated more fully in the chapter on Confession. However, it is necessary to point out here that we should not take God's forgiveness for granted. We creatures are under an obligation to forgive each other, but God is under no obligation to forgive us. He does so purely from love, being "moved" to do so by His Son's Passion and Death. We should be eternally grateful to God for His ready offer of pardon, a pardon which obliterates the sin for which we are sorry.

G. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

At death, our immortal soul will go to Eternal Life or Damnation. Our bodies will meanwhile disintegrate in the grave. According to this doctrine, we believe that because the soul is only in a natural state when united to its body, God will, at the last day, reconstitute the bodies we possessed, and soul and body will once more be

re-united, now less encumbered by physical limitations and endowed with a certain quality of glory. (Jn. 6, 40. I Cor. 15, 35-44.)

H. LIFE EVERLASTING

1. **The Judgment.** For Our Lord's description of the Judgment, read Matthew 25, 31-46. This passage is descriptive of the General Judgment at the last day when all men will see the Justice of God worked out in respect of their own lives and those of all men. But before then, immediately after death, there will take place the Particular Judgment at which each man will be made aware of his eternal fate.

2. **Limbo** is a place of natural happiness (in contrast to the much greater supernatural happiness of Heaven) in which were detained those good people whose lives were blameless and who died before Christ's act of Redemption was accomplished. To this place Our Lord descended after His death, to lead forth to Heaven the first fruits of His Victory. Also destined to spend eternity in the happiness of Limbo are those infants who have died without Baptism.

3. **Purgatory.** A person who commits a sin disturbs the Order of Divine Justice. He steals some pleasure to which he is not entitled. Even though the guilt of the sin is forgiven, the rebalancing of the scales of justice demands an equivalent suffering, either here or hereafter. Those go to Purgatory who die before they have paid off in this world the debt of suffering either for their forgiven sins, or their unpardoned venial sins, or both. The suffering of Purgatory, readily chosen by the Holy Souls as the only means of approach to God, consists in their being temporarily parted from God, and in the actual cleansing pain, compared to that of fire.

4. **Hell.** Some called Christians deny the existence of Hell; they claim that it is inconsistent with the love of God. In denying this doctrine, they imply that they know better than God Himself, for Our Lord was most explicit on the subject. Very often in the Gospels does He speak of Hell. No one has the right to pick and choose, rejecting those sayings that they find unpleasant.

The pain of Purgatory is for a time only, but the pain of Hell has no end for those who condemn themselves to it. Just as some of the angels freely chose Hell, so also do the damned choose it, their pride and self-love refusing God's Pardon and Love. There is no possibility of their will ever changing, for God cannot force them to love Him and their choice remains eternally against God.

5. **Heaven.** Just as parents will keep as a surprise the Christmas presents they have bought for their children, so to a large extent has God kept the pleasures of Heaven secret from us. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (I Cor. 2, 9.) We do know this, however, that the greatest happiness of Heaven will consist in the vision of and union with God. This union with God which we hope to experience is a union with the Source of all the joy, beauty, goodness, love we have ever known on earth. It will be the fulfilment of all we have ever desired, changing time into an ecstatic and never ending now—Eternity.

Among the secondary joys of Heaven will be our meeting once more with those we have loved. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning, or cries of distress, no more sorrow; those old things have passed away." (Apoc. 21, 4.)

CHAPTER FOUR

HOPE—TRUSTING IN GOD

1. **What Hope is.** Hope is the virtue by which “we firmly trust that God will give us Eternal Life, and all the means necessary to obtain it, if we do what He requires of us.” (Catechism.) Just as we can be sure that any good person can be trusted, so also can we be absolutely certain, that God, who is Goodness Itself, can be trusted supremely.

2. **Sins Against Hope** are despair and presumption. Despair is the complete lack of trust in God, which leads a man to think that he is beyond God’s mercy and love. Presumption, on the other hand, is an excessive hope based on the falsehood that no matter how a man lives his life, God will see to it that he will be saved.

It is unlikely that a practising Catholic will fall completely into either state, but it is possible that in times of trial and distress, his trust in God will burn less brightly. At such times it is necessary to remind oneself of the love God has for each individual one of us, a love manifested through the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

3. **The Sacred Heart** of Our Lord, (the heart is regarded as the source of love), is the symbol that focuses our attention on the overwhelming love God has for men as expressed through the Manhood of Christ. This love of God for us is not a vague feeling of benevolence on God’s part. It is an intimate, personal love which, if we were to realize its intensity even dimly, would leave us bewildered as to how we might make some return.

In His life on earth, Our Lord had dealings with all

sorts of people: young and old, simple and sophisticated, saints and sinners. Without exception they all found it easy to approach Him, and having come to Him in sincerity they knew they could trust Him utterly and be sure, in response to their trust, of His sympathy and love.

Our Lord has not changed. "Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day and the same for ever . . ." He was then, He is now the Perfect Friend to whom we can turn at any time, sure always of His sympathetic response to our trust.

"Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I put all my trust in Thee."

CHAPTER FIVE

CHARITY—LOVING GOD

A. THE LAW OF CHARITY

1. *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength.”*
2. *“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

We prove our love for God, not by developing sentimental feeling towards Him, but by keeping His commandments. “If you love me,” Our Lord said, “you will keep my commandments.” (Jn. 15, 10.)

The love we ought to have for our neighbour will be treated in the explanation of the fifth commandment.

B. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

were given by God to Moses as he was leading his people in their escape from Egypt. In this forty-year journey back to their own country, these were becoming forgetful of the one true God and of the obligations of the Natural Law. It was to bring them back to the moral truth, that God made this explicit statement of the Commandments.

Although given to the Jews many thousands of years ago, all men, Catholics or not, Christians or not, can regard the Commandments as a code by which God wants them to live. A person who disregards them jeopardises his salvation in the next world and his peace of mind in this.

1. *Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth,*

beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.

2. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain.*

3. *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.*

4. *Honour thy father and thy mother.*

5. *Thou shalt not kill.*

6. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

7. *Thou shalt not steal.*

8. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

9. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.*

10. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.*

First Commandment

(a) We are commanded to worship God by Faith, Hope, Charity and Religion.

Sins against Faith: wilful doubt, disbelief, reading literature aimed at undermining the Faith, the support of false religions or active participation in their services.

Sins against Hope: despair and presumption.

Sins against Charity: any sin is a denial of our love of God, and so is against Charity.

Sins against Religion: the giving to anything or anyone less than God the worship that belongs to Him alone or, on the other hand, lack of reverence for sacred things and persons.

(b) Under this commandment can be included also the neglect of spiritual duties, particularly prayer, either its complete neglect, or deliberate lack of attention during prayer due to wilful distractions.

(c) Superstitions such as consulting clairvoyants or relying on charms are forbidden. Medals are not charms; they are an expression of our dependence on God and His Saints.

(d) Statues are not forbidden to us for we do not

regard them as intrinsically worthy of honour, but only relatively in so far as they help to remind us of Our Lord, Our Lady or the Saints.

Second Commandment forbids us to use God's name irreverently (as in bad language) or untruthfully to call upon His name in support of a lie (perjury) or flippantly, in making a rash vow. Catholics, out of respect for and gratitude to Our Saviour, are in the habit of bowing their heads when they say the holy name "Jesus".

Third Commandment tells us to keep one day a week free from work so as to be able to devote that day more fully to the worship of God. Christians changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday to commemorate the greatest event of Christianity—the Resurrection—which took place on a Sunday. As to the type of work forbidden and reasons that would allow a person to work on Sunday, these are questions difficult to answer without consideration of individual circumstances; a person in doubt about such matters would be well advised to put his case to a priest.

The obligation binding Catholics to hear Mass on Sunday will be dealt with under the Commandments of the Church.

Fourth Commandment regulates the relationship between authority and subject.

- (a) It commands respect and obedience towards parents and all lawful authority. Obedience to parents will primarily affect children, but adult sons and daughters also have a grave duty to see to the welfare of their parents in old age.
- (b) It likewise commands those in authority to look to the welfare of their subjects: parents to the spiritual, mental and bodily good of their children, (a responsibility that can never be taken from the parents except when they are incapable of

exercising it, and never wholly transferable by parents to another authority); employers towards the temporal and moral good of their employees; the State to the welfare of all sections of the community equally.

Fifth Commandment

- (a) Murder and suicide are forbidden, for life is given by God and only He has the right to take it away. However, legitimate self-defence, either by a nation (in a just war resisting aggression), or by the State (in resisting murderers), or by the individual (in resisting a murderous attack), may necessitate the taking of life, but this is not murder.
- (b) An unborn baby is not an unjust aggressor, and has an equal right to live as its mother. Just as the mother may not be killed to save her baby, neither may the baby be murdered to save the mother.
- (c) Actions harmful to our neighbour are forbidden: bodily and mental cruelty, violence, revenge, temper, fighting, quarrelling, scandal (i.e. provoking another to sin), bad example.
- (d) Words harmful to our neighbour are forbidden: talking unkindly to or about a person, destroying his good name.
- (e) Thoughts harmful to our neighbour are forbidden: hatred, ill-will, uncharitable thoughts.

In our relations with our neighbour, (and no one is excluded from the term "neighbour"), we must not limit our charity simply and negatively to the keeping of this Commandment. Our Lord did not say, "Do not be unkind to your neighbour", but, "Love your neighbour as you love yourself", meaning you must regard his interests and welfare as dear to you as your own.

In His description of the Last Judgment, (Mt. 25, 34-36), Our Lord implies that much will depend on the way we

have treated others. Such is His love for men that He regards a kindness done to anyone as a kindness to Himself. If Jesus Christ loved our neighbour enough to die for him, he deserves much more than that we should simply avoid hurting him. We must love him in a positive, unsentimental, practical way.

Sixth and Ninth Commandments forbid impure thoughts desires and actions.

God has implanted in each man and woman two very strong instincts: self-preservation and self-reproduction. In order to ensure that they are obeyed, He has attached a pleasure to each; to the first, the pleasure of eating, and to the second, the pleasure of sex. If it were not for the pleasure of appetite, a person would hardly bother with food; he could easily starve and die. If it were not for the attraction of sex, people would not be concerned to marry and have children and the human race would die.

These two pleasures are meant to be enjoyed as God intended: namely, in the exercise of the instincts. Therefore, since only those who have the stability of marriage are in a position to bring children into the world and rear them properly, it is obvious that they alone can exercise the instinct of self-reproduction and enjoy the pleasure God has attached to the instinct. Thus it follows that:

- (a) *Married people* must use this faculty in accordance with God's design. They may not frustrate its purpose by artificially divorcing the pleasure from the normal fulfilment of the instinct.
- (b) *Unmarried people* may never deliberately arouse sexual pleasure. To do so is a grave deviation from God's plan for the continuation of the human race.
- (c) Since *impure thoughts and desires* very often lead to impure actions, a person who has difficulty in keeping this commandment must try to rid his mind of ideas that are sexually arousing, concen-

trating on more suitable, wholesome thoughts. He must avoid salacious stories, books, magazines, pictures and films which he thinks are likely to add to his store of erotic phantasies. With the help of grace and prayer, he should train himself to reject impure thoughts as soon as he becomes morally aware of them. By constancy in prayer and fidelity to grace, such immediate rejection can become a spontaneous reaction. The result will be not only a pure mind, but a pure body.

Seventh and Tenth Commandments forbid all sins of injustice, whether it be the actual or equivalent taking of what belongs to another, envy of another's possessions, or avarice and greed.

- (a) *Actual theft* is not confined to personal thieving but can include the acceptance of goods known to be stolen.
- (b) *Equivalent theft* is the refusal to give to another what is his due in justice; for example, an employer giving an unjust wage or an employee wasting his employer's time or materials.
- (c) In determining *the gravity* of a sin of injustice the act has to be considered from two angles:
 - (i) **Relatively:** The degree of injury inflicted will vary according to the circumstances of the person injured (e.g., to steal a small sum from a very poor person would be a mortal sin.)
 - (ii) **Absolutely:** When the value stolen is in itself a grave amount, irrespective of the person (or corporation) from whom it is stolen, a mortal sin is committed.
- (d) *The obligation of restitution* binds a person, as a condition for the forgiveness of his sin, to return or, at least, to have the intention of returning, as soon as possible, that which he has stolen or its value.

Eighth Commandment forbids deceit, lying, rash judgment, calumny, detraction. Very often a simple lie (e.g., of exaggeration, or to avoid trouble) will be a venial sin. A lie could be a mortal sin if it pertained to a serious matter (e.g., evidence on oath, or damaging another's good name).

* * *

C. THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH

The Church can make laws. The very fact that Our Lord constituted the Church as a society implies that He gave her the power to make laws. He gave this power explicitly when He said to His Apostles, "He who listens to you, listens to Me: he who despises you, despises Me." (Lk. 10, 16.) "All that you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven; all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." (Mt. 18, 18.)

Differences between the two sets of Commandments. The Commandments of God are an expression of the Natural Law and so, oblige all men to obey them. The laws of the Church bind Catholics only. Because the Ten Commandments were given by God, the Church cannot dispense from them. However, the laws of the Church are made by the Church, and she can therefore dispense from them.

The Chief Commandments

1. *"To keep the Sundays and Holy days of obligation holy by hearing Mass and resting from servile works."*

- (a) Catholics are bound to come to Mass on Sundays and certain Holy days. If they miss Mass on these days without having a proportionately grave reason, they commit a mortal sin.
- (b) The Church has made this law because human nature being what it is, members of the Church

might otherwise become neglectful of the obligation to worship God.

(c) Some proportionately grave reasons for missing Mass: sickness (sufficiently serious to keep a person confined to the house, if not to bed), old-age, considerable distance from the church and no reasonable mode of transport. The Church is not immoderate in this matter, and if a person sincerely believes that it is impossible for him to come to Mass without serious inconvenience, he commits no sin at all if he misses.

(d) Holy days of obligation in England: (there are slight differences from country to country.) Christmas Day, The Circumcision (January 1st), The Epiphany (January 6th), SS. Peter and Paul (June 29th), Ascension Thursday, Corpus Christi, The Assumption of Our Lady (August 15th), All Saints (November 1st). Although many of these days will be work-days, Catholics now do not find it as difficult to attend Mass as they did formerly because of the new regulation allowing Mass in the evening.

2. *"To keep the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church."*

(a) *The reason for the law*: The keeping of this is unpleasant in that it entails a small degree of suffering. The Church regards this suffering as a necessary reminder to her children that they should not leave Our Lord solitary in His suffering. Sympathy means literally to "suffer with". We can best be in sympathy with Christ, (particularly on the day of the week on which He suffered for us), by enduring this slight inconvenience in union with Him in His Passion.

(b) *Fasting* refers to the amount eaten. On a fast day a Catholic is allowed one full meal at which he can eat as much as he likes, and a small

amount at only two other meals during the day; for instance, cereal and a slice of toast and butter at one, and slightly more at a second meal. At present, in England, there are four fast days a year: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, the Eve of the Assumption (August 14th), and Christmas Eve. A parish priest can dispense from fasting for a good reason.

- (c) *Abstinence* refers to quality. Meat and anything made with meat (e.g. soups) are forbidden on Fridays. Again, for a serious reason, the parish priest may dispense a person from the law.

3. "To go to Confession at least once a year."

4. "To receive Holy Communion at least once a year and that at Easter or thereabouts."

These two commandments are linked because together they constitute what we commonly term "Easter Duties".

In this law the Church puts forward the very minimum that she expects of her children. In point of fact, most Catholics come to Confession and Holy Communion much more often than once a year, but there are some who, for one alleged excuse or another, would not receive the Sacraments at all, if it were not for this law. Those who do not "make their Easter Duties", cut themselves off from the Life of Grace, become dead members of the Mystical Body of Christ, a shame to themselves, an embarrassment to others.

The period for Easter Duties extends from Ash Wednesday to Trinity Sunday (eight weeks after Easter).

5. "To contribute to the support of our pastors."

It would be unrealistic to imagine that the Church does not need money. Without money she could not educate her priests, staff her churches, build and keep in repair the ecclesiastical buildings, organize the numerous works devoted to charitable purposes. It is an obligation, there-

fore, for each member to support, according to his means, the Church that brings him so many blessings from God.

6. *“Not to marry within certain degrees of kindred, nor to solemnise marriage at the forbidden times.”*

“Degrees of kindred”—consanguinity, affinity, or spiritual relationship.

“Solemnise”—Nuptial Mass and blessing.

“Forbidden times”—Advent and Lent.

For a sufficiently grave reason, a dispensation may be obtained in each case.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LIFE OF GRACE

1. **Grades of Life.** We see around us in the world, varying grades of being. The lowest have no life at all. Thus a stone has a bare existence vastly inferior to that of a plant, for a growing plant has life, though in a much more limited way than an animal, which has powers of perception and movement and instinct. The life of a man, with his faculties of will and intellect, is on a far higher plane than that of the animal. There is a higher life still, a life men may attain though it is not natural to them; a life that can transform those who have it into superhumans. This superhuman, supernatural life is Grace.

2. **What is Grace?** "Grace is a supernatural gift of God freely bestowed upon us for our sanctification and salvation." (Catechism.) It is the gift to us from God of a share in His Divine Life which elevates us beyond the level of our ordinary humanity, (that is the meaning of supernatural,) makes us members of God's family, His children.

Our Lord spoke many times of this Life of Grace. "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have Life in you." (Jn. 6, 54.) "I have come that they may have Life and have it more abundantly." (Jn. 10, 10.) Those who were listening to these words already had human life; He was referring to a Life greater than that: the Life of God which He had come to give to men.

3. **Why God gives Grace.** The gap between God and man (considered simply as human beings), is very much

greater than the gap between men and the very lowest form of animal life. Just as an intimate friendship between a man, and, let us say, a snail is unthinkable absurd and impossible, so intimacy and friendship between God and natural man is likewise completely impossible. God, therefore, gives a share of His Life (i.e., Grace) to men to enable them to be His intimate friends, and greater still, so that they can in very fact, be His sons and daughters.

4. What Grace makes of us

(a) *Sons of God*: "All those who did welcome Him" (Our Lord) "He empowered to become the children of God, all those who believe in His name." (Jn. 1, 12.) "See how God has shown His love towards us, that we should be counted as His sons, should BE His sons." (I Jn. 3, 1.)

(b) *Heirs to Heaven*: "To prove that you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out in us, Abba, Father. No longer then art thou a slave; thou art a Son and because thou art a Son, thou hast the Son's right of inheritance." (Gal. 4, 7-8.)

Grace is the beginning here on earth of our life in Heaven; for Heaven, as we have seen, consists in the possession and vision of God. Here we begin to possess; there, in addition we will have the vision. "At present, we are looking at a confused reflection in a mirror, then we shall see, face to face." (I Cor. 13, 12.) "We are the Sons of God even now, and what we shall be hereafter has not been made known as yet. But we know that when He comes, we shall be like Him, we shall see Him then as He is." (1 Jn. 3, 2.)

(c) *Temples of God*: "If a man has any love for me, he will be true to my word, and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him,

and make our continual abode with him." (Jn. 14, 21.) "Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit has His dwelling in you? If anybody desecrates the temple of God," (by sins of impurity) "God will bring him to ruin. It is a holy thing, this temple of God, which is nothing other than yourselves." (1 Cor. 3, 16-17.) The person then in the state of Grace is never alone. He has God dwelling within him as his Guest, to whom he can turn at any time. (If you go to a Catholic funeral, you will notice the reverence which the liturgy of the Church shows to the body of the dead person, a reverence given on account of the fact that that body was once the shrine of God.)

5. The Bond of Grace. People in the state of Grace possess a relationship with each other that is much closer than any purely natural relationship, closer even than the relationship between husband and wife, mother and son. A realisation of this fact should serve as a strong deterrent against sins of unkindness. "'Who is a mother, who are brethren to me?'" Our Lord said to those who told Him that His Mother and relatives were waiting to see Him. "Then He stretched out His hand to His disciples and said, 'Here are my mother and my brethren! If anyone does the will of my Father, who is in Heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'" (Mt. 13, 46-50.) Our Lord did not mean this saying as a rebuff to His Mother. He was stating the fact that the relationship of Grace binds people closer to God (and so to each other) than any simply natural blood-relationship.

(Since in addition to being His sole human parent, Mary was "full of Grace", she was and is closer to Him than any other human being ever could be.)

6. Mortal Sin and Grace. Mortal sin puts an end to Grace within a person. Since mortal sin is a complete

rejection of God, it immediately terminates his sojourn with him. He ceases to be God's son. He loses his inheritance. If he dies without regaining it by true sorrow and confession, since he is no longer a member of God's family, he is excluded from his home and family-gathering: Heaven. He condemns himself to Hell.

7. **Growth of Grace.** Just as a person, when sick, is spoken of as not having much life in him, and at another time, when he is healthy, is described as "full of life", so also can we say that the supernatural life of Grace is capable of increase and growth. So wonderful a thing is it that it should be the constant ambition of every man to see to it that it is continually increasing. But how? By prayer and the Sacraments. Each time a person prays, he receives more Grace. Each time he receives a Sacrament with the right dispositions, a new surge of God's Life fills him, increasing his resemblance to Jesus (and so making him more pleasing to God), decreasing the possibility of losing it by mortal sin, increasing his capacity for happiness in Heaven.

Note: *Actual Grace*, distinct from Sanctifying Grace, which is a lasting state, is the moment to moment help God gives to each person, and which each person needs, to do some good action. It is an actual grace which inspires a person to come to confession after committing a mortal sin in order to regain Sanctifying Grace. It was also an actual grace that started you on this enquiry into the Catholic Faith.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SACRAMENTS—I

1. **What a Sacrament is.** "A Sacrament is an outward sign of inward Grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which Grace is given to our souls." (Catechism.) There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Penance, (Confession), Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, Matrimony. They are the chief means by which God gives us a share in His Life. They can be compared to seven great channels bringing from God to all who use them the life-giving and life-changing streams of Grace. Because they are the work of God, they act independently of the dispositions of the person who administers them. Whether he is a saint or a sinner will neither increase nor decrease the grace they give. Provided they themselves put no obstacle in the way, those who receive the Sacraments can be sure that the Grace of God is in fact given to them.

2. **"Outward Signs."** God could have chosen to limit the giving of Grace to the invisible manner in which He gives it to us whenever we pray. But instead, knowing how we rely on visible, audible, tangible things, He chose to use visible, audible, tangible signs, so that we can say whenever we see those signs being used in the manner He prescribed, "Now, at this moment, Grace is being given to me."

The outward signs of the Sacraments are called the matter and form. The matter is the material used and the action performed; the form is constituted by the words pronounced in conferring the Sacrament.

In Baptism: the pouring of water is the matter.

"I baptise thee . . ." etc., is the form.

Confirmation: the laying on of hands and anointing with oil.

“I sign thee . . .” etc.

Holy Communion: bread and wine.

“This is my Body. This is my Blood.”

Penance: the confession of sins.

“I absolve thee from thy sins . . .” etc.

Extreme Unction: anointing with oil.

“Through this holy anointing . . .” etc.

Holy Orders: laying on of hands by the Bishop.

“Receive the Holy Ghost . . .”

Matrimony: the mutual vow.

“I take thee . . .” etc.

3. **“Inward Grace.”** Why are there seven sacraments if they all give Grace? Because in addition to Sanctifying Grace, they each give a Grace particular to themselves. For example, the particular Grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony is to enable those who receive it to love and be faithful to one another and to overcome the difficulties which married life may present.

In addition, we can see how the Sacraments satisfy spiritual needs that correspond quite accurately to our physical needs. Baptism is being born of God, a new birth, the reception of God's life for the first time, just as at our human birth we begin a new life separate from our mother. Confirmation is a strengthening of it; Holy Communion is its Food, and Penance (after the manner of medical attention), is the repair or regiving of the Life, damaged or lost through sin. Matrimony and Holy Orders are concerned with the increase and government of the Church. And lastly, just as when in danger of death, every possible physical care and attention is paid to the invalid, so in the face of death we have the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, to console and comfort the soul and body.

4. **"Ordained by Jesus Christ."** As we have pointed out before, the Sacraments are not man-made; they were all instituted ("ordained") by Jesus Christ and we can see reference to them all in the pages of the New Testament.

"No man can enter into the Kingdom of God unless birth comes to him from water and the Holy Ghost."
(Jn. 3, 5.)

"The Apostles began to lay hands on them, so that the Holy Spirit was given them."

(Acts 8, 17.)

"This is my Body: this is my Blood."

(Mt. 26, 28.)

"When you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven."

(Jn. 20, 23.)

"What God has joined, let no man put asunder."

(Mt. 19, 6.)

"The purpose for which any high-priest is chosen from among his fellow-men and made a representative of men in their dealings with God, is to offer gifts and sacrifices in expiation of their sins."

(Heb. 5, 1.)

"Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the Lord's name."

(James 5, 14.)

5. **The Sacraments of the Dead** (Baptism and Penance) are so called because they give Life to the soul that is dead to God and thus they may be received by one who is in mortal sin provided he is repentant. The other five Sacraments, since their purpose is to increase Grace, presuppose the presence of the Life of God in the soul of the recipient. They may only be received, therefore, by one already in the state of Grace, and for a person in mortal sin to receive one of these Sacraments is a sacrilege.

6. **A Sacramental Character** is given by three of the Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders.

Baptism marks a person forever as a Christian, a follower of Christ; Confirmation, as a soldier of Christ; Holy Orders "impresses" on the soul of the recipient the priesthood of Christ. Since these characters (or marks or seals) are permanent, and remain despite the possible complete loss of Grace, these three Sacraments may never be received more than once.

BAPTISM

1. What it does negatively

(a) It removes original sin. The waters of Baptism wash away the stain of sin we have all inherited from Adam and Eve. Unfortunately, Baptism does not repair our wounded nature with its tendency or bias towards evil (called concupiscence), which we also inherit and which will be with us always.

(b) It removes actual sin. If a person receives Baptism at an age when he has been able to sin, it will remove all those sins provided he is sorry for them. Together with the actual sin, it will also cancel out the debt of punishment due for them.

2. What it does positively

(a) It infuses sanctifying Grace, the life of God, and the virtues for supernatural faculties of Faith, Hope and Charity.

(b) It makes the recipient a son or daughter of God. This is not simply a pious title; it is a vital reality of dazzling dignity. Henceforth and the baptized person can look to God as a real Father.

(c) It makes a Christian of the recipient, a follower of Christ. St. Paul speaks of the Christian as "putting on Christ," being grafted into the Mystical Body of Christ in virtue of Baptism. In another place (Romans 6: 4), he speaks of this Sacrament as reproducing in us the Death and

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SACRAMENTS—II

BAPTISM

1. What it does negatively

- (a) *It removes original sin.* The waters of Baptism wash away the stain of sin we have all inherited from Adam and Eve. Unfortunately, Baptism does not repair our wounded nature with its tendency or bias towards evil (called concupiscence), which we also inherit and which will be with us always.
- (b) *It removes actual sins.* If a person receives Baptism at an age when he has been able to sin, it will remove all those sins provided he is sorry for them. Together with the actual sins, it will also cancel out the debt of punishment due for them.

2. What it does positively

- (a) *It infuses Sanctifying Grace*, the Life of God, and the virtues (or supernatural faculties) of Faith, Hope and Charity.
- (b) *It makes the recipient a son or daughter of God.* This is not simply a pious title; it is a vital reality of dazzling dignity. Henceforward the baptised person can look to God as a real Father.
- (c) *It makes a Christian of the recipient*, a follower of Christ. St. Paul speaks of the Christian as "putting on Christ", being grafted into the Mystical Body of Christ in virtue of Baptism. In another place (Romans 6, 4), he speaks of this Sacrament as reproducing in us the Death and

Resurrection of Christ. Just as Our Lord died, was buried, and rose again, so we die to sin, are buried in the waters of Baptism and rise to a newness of life with Christ.

- (d) It makes the recipient a *member of the Church*. It is the formal ceremony of admittance into the Catholic Church.
- (e) It makes the recipient *able to receive the other Sacraments*, and join himself to the Sacrifice of the Mystical Body, the Mass.

3. **Who can baptise?** In normal circumstances, only priests. But such is the necessity of Baptism for salvation, that in a case of urgency (e.g. proximity of death combined with the unavailability of a priest), anyone can baptise. Even an unbeliever who administers the Sacrament in accordance with the intentions of the Church, does in fact confer the Sacrament.

4. **How to baptise** in a case of necessity. Simply pour water on the head of the person, and while performing that action, say at the same time these words: "I baptise thee, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

5. **The Ceremonies of Baptism.** In addition to the actual baptising, described in the preceding paragraph, there are other ceremonies (which must be performed later by a priest if, due to dire urgency, they have been omitted previously.) These ceremonies include:

An exorcism (expulsion) of the Devil.

An anointing of breast and shoulders, symbolic of the spiritual strength imparted by Baptism and needed by the Christian.

A solemn renouncing of the Devil (called "Baptismal Vows".)

A second anointing on the forehead which dedicates and consecrates the person to God.

A clothing with a white garment, symbolic of the person's innocence after Baptism. "Receive this white garment," says the priest as he lays the linen over the head of the child, "and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life."

A handing over of a lighted candle: "Receive this burning light and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame. Keep the Commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet Him in the company of all the Saints in the Heavenly court, and live for ever and ever."

6. **Sponsors at Baptism.** At the Baptism of an infant, the sponsors (god-parents) answer the responses on behalf of the child. It is their solemn duty henceforth to see that the Faith of their god-child should be safeguarded, and if the parents of the child fail in this respect, it is their duty to step in. It will be obvious from this that a non-Catholic may not act as sponsor at a Catholic Baptism.

7. **Kinds of Baptism**

(a) *Conditional.* Many Converts who come for instructions have already gone through a ceremony of Baptism in their own Church years previously. We have seen that anyone is capable of baptising and we also know that Baptism cannot be given twice. Thus, if it were certain that the original ceremony had been validly performed, there would be no need for a second Baptism when the convert is received into the Catholic Church. But, as there is often some doubt as to the intention of the original minister and the mode of his administration of Baptism, for safety's sake, Conditional Baptism is given at the reception into the Church of such a convert. It is a short ceremony; the priest simply adds some such condition as, "If you are not already

baptised then I baptise you . . .”, etc. and simultaneously pours water on the head of the convert. If the convert has already been baptised, this ceremony will effect no change in him. If he has not previously been baptised, then he will at that moment receive the Sacrament for the first time. (Note: A convert who has never undergone a ceremony of Baptism, is given full and solemn Baptism as described in Paragraph 5 above.)

- (b) *Baptism of Blood* is a term describing the non-ceremonial reception of Grace and Divine Sonship which those who have not had the opportunity of being baptised by water receive when they die as martyrs for the Faith.
- (c) *Baptism of Desire* describes the reception of the same gifts by those who, sorry for their sins, love God and desire to do His will. If such people die in that state before they have had the opportunity of receiving Baptism of water, they will certainly be saved.

CONFIRMATION

God is not satisfied that we should remain simply His children. He wants us to grow up, to be able to fight, and, if necessary, be prepared to suffer for the Faith given in Baptism.

You may have noticed that there is no “Amen” at the end of the form used in Baptism. The reason is that Baptism is not final: it is completed by Confirmation.

1. **On Whit Sunday** the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles. It was their Confirmation day, and what a change the Sacrament brought about in them! From being timid and hesitant, they became bold in the preaching of the Gospel, fearful of nothing. Substantially the Grace they received on that day is the Grace given to each person confirmed.

2. **The Holy Ghost is given** in Confirmation to console and guide and strengthen. With the Holy Ghost come His gifts: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Piety and the Fear of the Lord. These gifts help us to maintain a correct, healthy attitude to the life we lead, with the many problems that are bound to beset us.

3. **The Character.** A change is wrought in the soul of the recipient making him henceforth a soldier of Christ, a fighter of God's battles. This Sacrament is usually given to adolescents; they stand in great need of God's help in this transitional stage of their lives.

4. **The Minister of Confirmation** is ordinarily a Bishop but a parish priest has the power to confirm those who are in proximate danger of dying without the Grace and character of Confirmation. Normally, the Bishop will be able to visit each parish in his diocese (i.e., the area for which he is responsible) once every three or four years. It is possible, therefore, that the convert might be advised by his priest-instructor to make a journey to a parish where the Bishop is confirming, rather than wait, possibly a considerable time, before Confirmation is administered in his own parish.

5. **The Ceremony of Confirmation.** The Bishop first prays that the Holy Ghost will descend on those to be confirmed. Then he lays his hand on the head of each person and he makes a cross with oil on the forehead (as in Baptism, a sign of strength,) and says, "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism (oil) of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." He then taps the recipient on the cheek for a sign that he must be ready to defend the Faith.

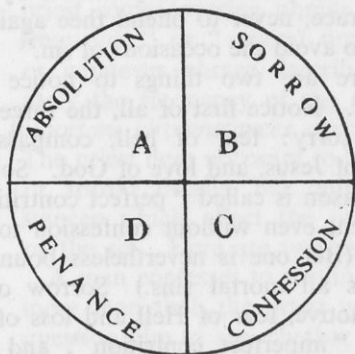
A new name is taken and a sponsor of the same sex is needed.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Most converts dread the thought of going to Confession. For that matter, even Catholics who have been coming to Confession for years must admit that they hardly look forward to it. Telling one's private, personal failings to someone else is unlikely to be a pleasant thing. Here are three points that may help:

- (a) The small amount of suffering we have to endure in going to Confession cannot compare with the sufferings of Our Lord, which He had to endure so that our sins could be forgiven.
- (b) The priest himself has to go to Confession and so he knows how you feel.
- (c) After their first (and usually most trying) Confession, most converts say, "If I had only known how easy and gentle it was going to be, I would not have been so worried."

The Sacrament of Penance as a circle. Try to think of this Sacrament as a circle. In your mind make a cross through that circle so that you now have four segments. Each segment is necessary for a good Confession.



- (a) The first segment is the *ABSOLUTION* and the only one of the four that is not your concern. You bring along with you three ingredients: the

priest is responsible for the fourth. In obedience to Our Lord's command, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven," when you have confessed your sins, he will say over you in the name of God, "I absolve you" (free you) "from your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

As we have said, the other three segments are your concern:

- (b) *SORROW*. This is called Contrition, and telling God that you are sorry for your sins is called making an Act of Contrition. This is the most important thing you have to do when you go to Confession. Even though God is Almighty, He cannot forgive a person his sins if he is not sorry. Here is an Act of Contrition: "O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins. I detest them above all things, because they deserve thy dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, and most of all because they offend thine infinite Goodness. And I firmly resolve by the help of thy Grace, never to offend thee again, and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin."

There are two things to notice about that prayer. Notice first of all, the three reasons for being sorry: fear of hell, compassion for the death of Jesus, and love of God. Sorrow for the last reason is called "perfect contrition", and is sufficient even without confession to remove all sins. (But one is nevertheless bound always to confess all mortal sins.) Sorrow only for the first motive, fear of Hell and loss of Heaven, is called "imperfect contrition", and while it is sufficient when joined to Absolution, will not remove sin outside of Confession.

The other aspect of this prayer is the determination contained in the last sentence not to sin

again. This is called a "firm purpose of amendment" and it is the proof of your sorrow. Don't be alarmed if you cannot *feel* sorry. Your main concern is that with God's help, you will be firm in your determination never to hurt Him again. The time to feel alarm is when you find yourself confessing the same serious, deliberate sins confession after confession.

(c) *CONFESSION*. One is bound to tell in Confession:

(i) *All mortal sins*. You cannot commit a mortal sin by accident or in ignorance. So, if you have discovered, since you began your instructions, that acts you have done in the past are in fact mortal sins though at the time you did not even suspect they might be, you are not bound to confess them.

(ii) *The number of times*. God does not expect the impossible, and it may be quite impossible for a convert making his first confession to remember the number of times; in such a case it is sufficient to say to the priest some covering phrase such as "Very frequently," or "several times each week," or whatever phrase describes most accurately the frequency of the sins.

(iii) *Important circumstances concerning the sins*. The priest does not want to hear unnecessary or sordid details, but only those circumstances which affect the nature or gravity of the sin. Here are two examples:

A man confesses to stealing. If he says no more than that, the priest will be bound to question him to see whether it was a mortal or venial sin. If he has stolen ten shillings from a very poor person, it is obviously worse than if he stole ten pounds from the Bank of England.

A person says he has been impure. Again, if he is not told, the priest will have to ask, "By thought, word or deed?" If by deed, then it is one sort of sin for an unmarried person and quite a different sort for one who is married.

- (d) *THE PENANCE.* This is no more than your willingness to say the prayers that the priest will ask you to say. This penance has a special value in removing at least part of the punishment still due to you for those forgiven sins, for although the Sacrament removes guilt, it still leaves the debt of punishment; that has to be paid, either in this world or the next.

Absolution, sorrow, confession, the penance: the circle is complete and a good confession has been made. All the past, with its betrayals, is readily forgotten by Our Lord. You are able to start anew.

What To Do

(a) *Before Confession*

- (i) Ask God to help you to remember your sins and to be really sorry for them.
- (ii) In your mind, run through the Commandments mentally checking those you have broken. This is called "examination of conscience".
- (iii) In your own words, tell God you are sorry, why you are sorry, and promise Him that with His Grace, you will not be guilty of those sins again. Then for full measure, say the Act of Contrition you have memorized. (It may be helpful towards the devout saying of this prayer to have a picture in your mind of Our Lord dying on the Cross.)

- (b) *In the Confessional.* Kneel down and say, "In

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." (Some converts are in the habit of saying here: "I am a convert." This alerts the priest to be even more helpful.) "It is weeks since my last Confession. These are my sins." When you have finished telling your sins, say, "Those are all the sins that I can remember, and I am sorry for any I may have forgotten." The priest will then tell you what prayers to say for your penance and ask you to say your Act of Contrition. While you are saying it, he will be pronouncing the words of Absolution.

(c) *After Confession*

- (i) Say your penance.
- (ii) Thank God for His pardon, and ask Him for His help in the future.
- (iii) Say a short prayer for the priest.

Helpful Hints

- (a) If you have a sin which is worrying you greatly and which you feel very nervous of confessing, say so to the priest; by helpful questioning, he will relieve you of the necessity of putting the sin into words yourself.
- (b) Never imagine that any sin you confess will shock the priest. He will have heard it many times before.
- (c) The priest never thinks the worse of a penitent. On the contrary, the more difficult the confession, the greater will be his admiration for the penitent's courage and sincerity.
- (d) It is unknown in the long history of the Church for a sin told in Confession ever to be divulged.
- (e) If the convert is likely to find it difficult to confess to the priest who has instructed him, he need only say so, and it will be arranged for a priest

who does not know the convert to hear his first confession.

- (f) If you wish, the priest will show you the place where you make your confession (called the confessional), both his side and yours.
- (g) The Convert should talk over with his instructor the frequency of coming to Confession. Unless he establishes a routine (weekly, fortnightly or monthly), a convert will be in some danger of putting off his *second* confession, and the longer he delays it, the more difficult he will find it.

Doubts and Difficulties

- (a) "*What if I forget a mortal sin in Confession?*"

Next time you go to Confession say, "In my last Confession I forgot to say . . ." In the meantime, however, you are in the State of Grace, and so able to receive Holy Communion.

- (b) "*Need I go to Confession each time I go to Communion?*"

Only if you have committed a mortal sin. But even if you have not, it is wise not to leave your Confession longer than a month if you are coming to Communion weekly.

- (c) "*Am I bound to tell venial sins too?*"

No. But it is silly to hold back a venial sin. On the other hand, it is a mortal sin and completely nullifies the whole Sacrament if you deliberately hold back a mortal sin.

- (d) "*What if I am doubtful as to whether something I have done is a mortal sin or not?*"

For your own peace of mind, mention it to the priest.

The Words of Absolution. While you are saying your Act of Contrition after confessing your sins, this is the prayer the priest says (in Latin) for you. As you will see, there is considerably more than the simple words of Absolution quoted above:

“May Almighty God have mercy on thee, and forgive thee thy sins and bring thee to life everlasting. Amen.”

“May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant thee pardon, absolution, and forgiveness of all thy sins. Amen.”

“May Our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee, and I, by His authority, absolve thee from every bond of excommunication and interdict, so far as I can, and thou hast need. Thereupon I absolve thee” (the priest makes the sign of the cross over the penitent) “from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

“May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, whatever good thou shalt have done and evil” (suffering) “shalt have endured be to thee unto forgiveness of sins, increase of Grace, and reward of life everlasting. Amen.”

HOLY COMMUNION

1. **All life needs food.** All living beings need food. If a plant is to survive, it needs to be in soil that is able to feed it. Animals and men need food to keep their bodies alive. In a limited sense, even the intelligence needs food: “food for thought.”

We have seen that Baptism gives a new life to a person, a share in the Life of God. Who else could provide food for that Life but God Himself? Who else could BE Food for that Life but God Himself?

2. **The Promise** of this food is given in St. John's Gospel, Chapter 6. Our Lord had just performed the lake-side miracle by which He fed a crowd of five thousand by multiplying five loaves and fishes. As a result, the people wanted to make Him their earthly king. To avoid this misunderstanding of His real purpose in becoming a man, Our Lord hid Himself from them. The next day, on the opposite shore of the lake, in a town called Capharnaum, the people rediscovered Our Lord and questioned

Him sceptically regarding His mission. The meeting adjourned to the Synagogue and Our Lord gave the sermon concerning the Holy Eucharist:

“It is I who am the bread of Life. Your fathers who ate manna in the desert died none the less; the bread which comes down from heaven is such that he who eats of it never dies. I myself am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live for ever. And now, what is this bread which I am to give? It is my flesh given for the life of the world.”

“Then the Jews fell to disputing with one another, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’ Whereupon Jesus said to them, ‘Believe me when I tell you this; you can have no life in yourselves unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood. The man who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood enjoys eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. My Flesh is real food, my Blood is real drink. He who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood, lives continually in me and I in him. As I live because of the Father, the living Father who has sent me, so he who eats me will live in his turn because of me. Such is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not as it was with your fathers who ate manna and died none the less; the man who eats this bread will live eternally.’” . . . “After this, many of His disciples went back to their old ways, and walked no more in His company. Whereupon Jesus said to the twelve (Apostles), ‘Would you too go away?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom should we go? Thy words are the words of eternal life; we have learned to believe and are assured that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.’” (Jn. 6, 47-70.)

Note.—If Our Lord had meant that He was giving His Body and Blood as food only in a figurative and not in a real sense, then He left His hearers under a false impression. They understood Him to be speaking of His real Body and His real Blood, and on that account some

walked "no more" with Him. If this had been a misunderstanding on their part, He would certainly have called them back to qualify His original statement, but He did not. It is clear, therefore, that He meant His real Body and His real Blood.

3. **The Fulfilment** of His promise took place at the Last Supper. St. John prefaces his account of this event by saying, "He still loved those who were His own, whom He was leaving in the world, and He would give them the uttermost proof of His love." This is St. Luke's version of the institution of this Sacrament. "And He said to them, 'I have longed and longed to share this Paschal meal with you before my Passion'. . . . Then He took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them saying, 'This is my Body, given for you; do this for a commemoration of me.' And so with the cup, when the supper was ended, 'This cup,' He said, 'is the new testament, in my Blood which is to be shed for you.'" (Luke 22, 15-20.)

As He said those words, although the appearances remained the same, the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine were changed into His Body and His Blood. (This change of substance is called "Transubstantiation".)

Knowing that succeeding generations of men would need this Food for their supernatural Life, Jesus handed over this tremendous power of changing Bread and Wine into His Body and Blood to the Apostles and their successors. "Do this for a commemoration of me."

4. **Is it credible?**

(a) Someone once said, "If you can believe that the Great God, the Maker of the Universe, could become a tiny Baby, this doctrine of transubstantiation is no harder to believe."

(b) Having in the first place created wheat and grapes, it is no problem for God to change them into whatever He wishes.

- (c) All Christians from the earliest days of Christianity to the time of the Reformation believed that Our Lord meant literally what He said. Since the Reformation this belief is largely confined to the many millions of Catholics. If this doctrine is not true, if Christ is not really present, then the vast multitude of Christians who believed it from the time of Christ to the time of the Reformation, all the millions of Catholics from the time of the Reformation to the present day and beyond, will at the Last Day be able legitimately to complain to God that He has deceived them.

5. **“Under one kind”.** In the early days of the Church, Holy Communion was given under both kinds, Bread and Wine. The faithful received not only the Host but drank of the Chalice. This custom has long since been abrogated, partly because of the great difficulty caused by the large number of people who receive. Only the priest receives Holy Communion under both kinds at the present time.

As the Body and Blood of Christ can no longer be truly separated, a person who receives Holy Communion “under one kind” alone does in fact receive the whole Christ; Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity.

6. **Effects of Holy Communion.** In general, one can say that “all those effects which material food and drink produce in regard to bodily life are produced in respect of the spiritual life by this Sacrament: it sustains, it gives increase, it repairs (the ravages of sin) and it gives delight.” (St. Thomas.)

- (a) *A great increase of Grace*, brought about by the close union with God, the Source of all Grace.
- (b) *Transformation into Christ.* In eating ordinary food, we transform it into our bodies. In eating this Divine Food, Jesus transforms us gradually

into Himself so that after each Communion we become more Christ-like. The two chief obstacles to this transformation are attachment to our sins and lack of charity.

(c) *Close union* between all who receive Holy Communion. The main bond of union in a family is the family meal. The main bond of union between Catholics is the Food which they eat to sustain the same spiritual Life.

(d) *Effect on the body* of the recipient. During our Lord's life on earth a woman was healed of a disease by touching only the hem of His garment. One cannot disregard the possible effects which bodily contact with this Sacrament may produce. In the prayer which a priest says when he takes Holy Communion to a sick person, this effect is mentioned: "O Holy Lord, Eternal God, we beseech Thee in all faith and confidence that the holy Body of Our Lord, Jesus Christ may profit our brother (sister) receiving it as an everlasting remedy both for *body* and *soul*."

7. Conditions required for Holy Communion

(a) *State of Grace*. Just as it is useless to give ordinary food to a dead person, so also Holy Communion is not given to a person who has lost the Life of Grace by mortal sin. A person who receives Holy Communion in mortal sin commits a terrible sacrilege.

(b) *Fasting from midnight*. As a sign of respect for this Sacrament, no food or drink (with the exception of plain water) may be taken after midnight if one wishes to receive Holy Communion the next morning. Where and when the extra hour of summer time is in force, midnight can be regarded as 1 a.m. A person who plans to receive Holy Communion at an evening Mass must fast from food for three hours previously and from

drink for one hour. He may not drink spirits (whisky, gin, brandy) at all during the day; beer and wine are allowed but only with meals. (For various classes of people whom a priest can exempt from the general rule, see paragraph 12.)

8. Prayers before Communion. A person who sits down to a meal with no appetite or interest in what he is eating will not benefit much from the meal. Likewise, a person who approaches Holy Communion with a listless attitude or a lack of appreciation for the great Gift he is about to receive, although the Sacrament will give him Grace, he will not benefit from that Communion as much as he might.

The way to develop a desire for Holy Communion and lay open the soul wide to God's Grace is by prayer. What prayers to say before Communion? Normally, you will receive Holy Communion during Mass, and once you have mastered the technique of saying the prayers of the Mass, you will be preparing yourself as well as it is possible to prepare. For the prayers of the Mass express all those dispositions which should be aroused before Communion: sorrow for sin, acknowledgement of one's unworthiness (i.e., humility), faith, desire for union with God, and love.

If, because of unusual circumstances, you have to receive Communion before or outside of Mass, you should be sure to say private prayers before Holy Communion. Tell Our Lord in simple language that you believe firmly you are going to receive Him, that you are sorry for your sins, that you are unworthy, that you desire to be united to Him. Don't hesitate to say a short prayer to Our Lady. She bore within herself for nine months that same Body that you are going to receive; turn to her and ask her to help you prepare for His coming to you and bodily sojourn within you.

9. Prayers after Communion. For approximately a

quarter of an hour after Communion, Our Lord is within you. It is a very precious fifteen minutes.

Some people enjoy a wordless all-absorbing union with Our Lord at this time. Others, to make sure that this time is not wasted, map out for themselves a practical programme of prayers after Communion: acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, Thanksgiving, Humility, Petition. It is certainly helpful to start with a vivid act of Faith in the real presence of Christ in you (e.g., "Jesus, true God and true Man, I believe you are firmly within me at this moment.") Such an act of Faith helps to elicit the subsequent acts of love, humility, etc. An aid to memory that has been found useful by some is contained in the word A-L-T-A-R: reminding us to say prayers of Adoration, Love, Thanksgiving, Asking and Reparation.

Prayers that are suitable for before and after Communion are to be found in *The Simple Prayer Book*, but so simple are they, it is vital that they be said very slowly and thoughtfully.

10. Frequency of Communion. At one time it was customary for Catholics to come to Communion only at rare intervals. But some fifty years ago, Pope St. Pius X, began to encourage people to receive much more often. If a person is in the state of Grace, said the Pope, and has the right motive (i.e., to please God), let him come to Communion as often as every day. Many ordinary Catholics, realising that this Sacrament is given to them under the appearance of bread, a day-to-day food, do in fact receive Holy Communion every day.

11. Jesus Christ in our churches. When the priest gives you Holy Communion, he takes the Host from a vessel called a Ciborium. When he has finished giving Holy Communion, he puts the Ciborium (still containing Hosts) back into the safe on the altar ("tabernacle".) Thus Our Lord stays on our altars all day and night all the year round. He is as really there as He was in the

home at Nazareth. Because of His presence, you go down on one knee (genuflect) when coming into Church; you will see also a small lamp burning ("sanctuary lamp") which is a sign to you that He is truly there. You can "make visits" to the church, sure, at any time, of a hearing.

12. **New Fasting Laws** for special classes of people. Certain people, **AFTER THEY HAVE CONSULTED A PRIEST**, may be allowed a drink (tea, coffee, milk, cocoa, medicine, etc.) before Holy Communion. These classes include: invalids (not necessarily confined to bed), expectant mothers, persons who live a long way from the church, night-workers, those who have to be up early and are able to receive only after 9 a.m. Invalids and expectant mothers may have a drink any time up to the moment of Holy Communion. All others must leave a space of one hour between the drink and the receiving of Holy Communion. It is necessary to consult a priest; no one can apply this law by himself.

HOLY ORDERS

1. **What is a priest?** A priest is a go-between, a mediator between God and men, a channel of Grace and blessings from God to men, deputed offerer of sacrifice and prayer from men to God. St. Paul writes: "The purpose for which any high priest is chosen from among his fellow-men, and made a representative of men in their dealings with God, is to offer gifts and sacrifices in expiation of their sins. His vocation comes from God . . . nobody can take on himself such a privilege as this." (Heb. 5, 1-4).

2. What the Sacrament of Holy Orders does

(a) *It gives two main powers:* the power of changing bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and the power of forgiving sins in God's name. A layman may say the words of

Consecration over bread and wine and the words of Absolution over another's sins, but no change takes place. In virtue of his ordination, only a priest is vested with these two tremendous powers. God, in His love for mankind, entrusts for ever, ("Thou art a priest for ever"), to certain men powers that belong to Himself alone.

(b) *It gives Grace* to aid the priest throughout his life as God's ambassador on earth.

3. "**Other Christs**". You may have noticed that in the exercise of the powers given him in ordination the priest speaks as though Jesus were speaking in him. Thus he says, "This is MY Body" not "This is the Body of Our Lord" and "I absolve thee" not "God absolves thee". Because of this partial identification of Jesus Christ with the priest he is spoken of as "another Christ". It is for this reason that Catholics always show great respect for a priest, whether they like and admire him or not. They call him "Father" for he is their Father-in-Christ, bringing to them the Life of God in Baptism, providing Food (as any good father does) for the nourishment of God's children, in the confessional healing and restoring when the Life is weakened or lost, instructing, correcting, encouraging.

4. **The Ordination Ceremony** is perhaps the most impressive ritual in the whole catalogue of the Church's ceremonial. The priest-elect prostrates himself on the floor of the sanctuary while the congregation sings the Litany of the Saints and the ordaining Bishop prays for the Holy Ghost to descend upon this chosen one of God. (Our Lord said to His Apostles, the first priests, "You have not chosen me, I have chosen you.") There is the laying on of hands, symbolic of the transference of power, the handing over of chalice and paten, (the instruments of sacrifice), the anointing of the hands that will, the next morning at the priest's first Mass, hold the Body of Christ, and the commission to offer Mass and forgive sins.

5. **Why priests do not marry.** It is a law of the Western Church that her priests should not marry. Here are two reasons:

- (a) Celibacy allows for a more completely dedicated life in the service of God and the Church. If priests married, much of their concern would be for family ties and responsibilities.
- (b) The complete giving of himself to God, body and soul, is an aid to a truly priestly life, in essence, one of sacrifice for others.

6. **Pray for priests** and for vocations to the priesthood, for the Church depends on her priests for consolidation and extension. Priests need your prayers for though they have the highest office it is possible for men to hold, and the most sublime dignity in being sharers of the Priesthood of Christ, they are by no means exempt from temptation and the liability to sin.

MATRIMONY

1. **Matrimony is a Sacrament** "which sanctifies the contract of a Christian marriage, and gives a special Grace to those who receive it worthily." (Catechism.) The contract consists in the mutual and "till death" promise of husband and wife to love each other, and in the bodily exchange of their love, to have children if God wills it.

2. **The ministers of the Sacrament** are the two parties who marry. In making their mutual vow they administer the Sacrament to each other. The priest, the best man, the bridesmaid, are necessary witnesses.

The Church has made a law that Catholics can only marry before a priest and two witnesses. If a Catholic attempts a marriage in a non-Catholic Church or Registry Office, he is not married at all. The State may regard him as married; God does not. This law binds Catholics. The Church does not make conditions for the validity of marriages between two non-Catholics. All things being

equal, she regards their marriages, whether in church or Registry Office, as valid, and so binding for life.

3. **The Purpose of the Sacrament** is to assist those who have undertaken this state of co-operation with God's creative power, to fulfill their many obligations both to each other and to their children and to surmount together the difficulties which may arise in the married state. The Grace of this Sacrament is not, therefore, confined to the wedding-day; it is spread over the whole married life, a continual guarantee from God that He will give His help to those who honestly try to carry out His laws.

4. **Obligations to each other.** These consist of mutual and unselfish love, expressed not only in the marital act, but in the day-to-day business of living together; an obligation on the part of the husband to love and respect his wife and provide the means necessary for her to keep a satisfying home; an obligation on the part of the wife to love and obey her husband and to put her heart into the creation of a real home.

5. **Obligations to their children.**

(a) *The souls of their children* have been put into the hands of parents by Almighty God and He will certainly look for an account of their stewardship at the Last Day. One rare occasion when Our Lord appeared angry was in the condemnation of those who damage the souls of children: "If anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones that believe in Me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea with a millstone hung about his neck." (Mt. 18.) Parents who throw the complete responsibility of their children's spiritual upbringing on to teachers, seriously neglect their first duty. By their lives they should be a continual example to their children, teaching them

about Our Lord, and not only teaching them their first prayers, but praying with them.

- (b) *The minds of their children* should be safeguarded, most especially by love and affection of a positive nature, by encouragement and interest in their education, by instruction in the matters of sex at the appropriate time.
- (c) *The bodies of their children* should be cared for by ensuring they get sufficient and suitable food, adequate clothing and enough sleep.

6. Married Happiness and Mixed Marriages. Married happiness depends primarily on the spiritual union between husband and wife. The bodily union is the outward and transient expression of a greater union that is inward and permanent, a union of souls. Consequently, the Church, anxious over the "here-and-now" as well as eternal happiness of her sons and daughters discourages marriages between Catholics and members of other religions. ("mixed marriages").

While it is not impossible for a good Catholic to be united in soul in a limited way with a non-Catholic, this union is much more slender than the great bond of a common Faith which unites two Catholics. A mixed marriage, therefore, is less likely to be a successful and happy marriage. It is for this reason, and because of the danger to the Faith of the Catholic partner and off-spring, that the Church requires some serious reason before she will allow one of her children to marry a non-Catholic.

7. Divorce is forbidden. This is the law of God binding all men. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." By its very nature, marriage is a contract entered into for life and not for the length of time the partners find convenient. By the vow made before God that the marriage is to be "till death do us part" the husband and wife bind themselves to each other and automatically preclude any possibility of divorce.

Because it is the law of God, the Church cannot dispense from it for any reason whatsoever. There may be hard cases, instances that cry out for our sympathy and help and prayers. But it must be kept in mind that God does not force a person to get married. He is free to marry or not. If he does, he must be prepared to accept marriage on God's terms, as a life-long contract, and he well knows beforehand that there can be no easy way out if things go badly.

Occasionally, one reads or hears of a Catholic getting a divorce. The "divorce" may be explained in one or another of three ways:

- (a) It may not be a divorce; it may be an annulment, i.e. a declaration by the Church that the union between A and B was never a real marriage for a specific reason, and so they are free to separate and marry "again". (Such a reason would be, for example, if one party had been forced against his will into matrimony.)
- (b) It may be a civil divorce of a Catholic who was previously invalidly married outside the Church. (See paragraph 2. Such a person has not been married at all.)
- (c) It may be a civil divorce of a person who has been validly married, but allowed in rare cases by the Church, NOT with a view to remarriage, which is out of the question, but simply because that is the only means to obtain certain civil effects (e.g. alimony, custody of the children.)

8. Unnatural Birth-Control is forbidden. Though widely disregarded in non-Catholic circles, this is another law of God binding on all men. It is not simply a Catholic law for Catholics only. You can read in the Bible (Genesis 38, 9-10) how God struck Onan dead for doing "this detestable thing". One can see from common sense how this is unnatural and so, sinful. Just as it would be against nature to vomit up a meal and prevent

the natural and subsequent effect of nutrition, in order to have the pleasure of a second meal, so also is it against nature to take the pleasure of sex and deliberately prevent the possible and natural effect of the sex-act. God made sex pleasurable for the purpose of procreation; to take the pleasure and frustrate the purpose is to defy the order of God's Universe. Such a reversal of the right order brings its own punishment in this life as well as in the next.

However, it must be noticed that just as there is no law of God commanding an individual to marry, so also there is no law of God dealing with the number of children a man and wife should have, (though very often the happiness of a family is in proportion to its size.) Nor does the law of God order in any way the frequency of marital relations except in so far as they are asked for by husband and wife. Hence, for a sufficient reason (poverty, health, housing, etc.) if a married couple find it difficult to have more children, they do not sin if they limit their sex relations to those times when conception is less probable, (the "safe period".)

In certain cases, observing this law of God may be extremely difficult. It may demand a strength of character and will that borders on the heroic. But, it must be remembered, God does not ask the impossible from anyone, nor does he ever allow a person to be tempted beyond his strength. The greater the difficulty, the more Grace and help will God willingly give to one who sincerely asks, and the greater will be the ultimate reward.

9. **The Marriage Ceremony** consists primarily in the vow made first by the bridegroom and then by the bride. "I, John (Mary) take thee Mary (John) for my lawful wedded wife (husband) to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part, and thereto I plight thee my troth." The husband then puts the wedding ring into the palm of the wife's hand and holding it in his own he says, "This gold and silver I thee give. With

my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow," and he puts the ring on his wife's finger saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

Then the priest says this prayer: "Look down we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon these thy servants, and graciously protect Thy institutions whereby Thou hast provided for the propagation of mankind, that those who are joined together by thine authority, may be preserved by Thy help, through Christ, Our Lord, Amen."

After this ceremony it is possible and desirable for a Catholic couple to have a Nuptial Mass—the best possible way to start their married life.

EXTREME UNCTION

"Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name. Prayer offered in Faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will give him relief; if he is guilty of sins, they will be pardoned." (James 5, 14-15).

1. **Who may receive this Sacrament?** Those who are in danger of death by sickness. "In danger of death" is not the same as "dying"; a person need not be dying before he can receive this Sacrament. "From sickness" means from actual sickness and so, for example, a lion-tamer may be in danger of death, but until he has been mauled, he is not in danger of death from actual sickness.

2. The Purposes of the Sacrament

- (a) To forgive sin. (Very often a dying person is unable to make his confession.)
- (b) To fortify the soul in the face of death.
- (c) To restore health, if God wills it.

3. **The Ceremony.** The priest makes a cross with the holy oil on the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, feet of the sick person saying at the same time, "By this holy anointing and by His most loving mercy, may the Lord pardon you whatever sins you have committed through (your sight, etc.)."

After the anointing he says this prayer, "O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, who by shedding the grace of Thy blessing upon our failing bodies, dost preserve by Thy manifold goodness, the work of Thy hands: graciously draw near at the invocation of Thy name, that having freed Thy servant from sickness and bestowed health upon him, Thou mayest raise him up by Thy right hand, strengthen him by Thy might, defend him by Thy power and restore him to Thy holy Church with all desired prosperity. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen."

If the sick person has died before the priest arrives, he will simply make one anointing on the forehead, in the hope that the person's soul, perhaps still with the body, may be capable of receiving the Sacrament.

4. **The Last Sacraments.** Under this term are included the three Sacraments, Confession, Extreme Unction and Holy Communion, when they are given to a person in danger of death or actually dying. Sometimes it will be impossible for the sick person to receive Holy Communion, or even make his Confession. In such a case, the priest will say the words of Absolution hoping that though the invalid is not able to speak, he is sorry for his sins and can make some slight external sign of sorrow. The priest will then administer Extreme Unction. (For how to prepare the sick room for the visit of the priest, see heading. "Sick call" in the glossary.)

Before he leaves, the priest will give the Last Blessing: "May Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who gave to His blessed Apostle, Peter, the power of binding

and loosing, in His most loving mercy receive thy confession and restore unto thee that first robe which thou didst receive in Baptism; and I by the power given to me by the Apostolic See grant thee a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

5. **Indulgences.** "An indulgence is a remission granted by the Church of the temporal punishment which often remains due to sin after the guilt has been forgiven." (Catechism.) The power of the Church to remit punishment still due to forgiven sin is implied in Our Lord's words, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."

To gain an indulgence, one must do a specified good work (e.g. a prescribed prayer), be in the state of Grace, be truly sorry for sin, and intend to gain the indulgence.

Indulgences may be partial or plenary. For example, if you say, "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us," you may gain the partial indulgence of seven years. That length of time, seven years, indicates that the Church attributes to you the effect of seven years' canonical penance, which was the accepted mode of penance in the early Church. Precisely how much of the punishment due to you is cancelled by that seven years' indulgence, no one but God knows. The time factor in indulgences (300 days, seven years, etc.) is an indication of the relative magnitude of the indulgence.

A plenary indulgence is a complete remission of the total punishment due to sin. One can never be sure in a particular case that one has had the dispositions required for the efficacy of a plenary indulgence.

Indulgences can be applied to the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

1. **The Eucharist is not only a Sacrament**, it is also a Sacrifice, and considered as a Sacrifice, it is called the Mass. It is necessary for an understanding of the Mass to distinguish clearly between the two notions of Sacrament and Sacrifice. They are, in a sense, opposites. A Sacrament consists in God giving men something; a Sacrifice consists in men giving God something. In the Sacraments men are the receivers; in Sacrifice men are the givers.

We have already considered the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament (i.e., as God giving us the Body and Blood of His Son to be Food for our new Life.) Now we proceed to regard the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice.

2. **What is a Sacrifice?** Everyone enjoys giving presents to those they love. The young man who saves up to give his fiancée an engagement ring is giving that present to show his affection for her: it is a sacrifice.

From the beginning of the world, men have given things to God; in so doing they have satisfied a deep human need. They have offered sacrifices of animals, food, wine, precious stones, etc. In giving these "victims" to God, they have always done two things: they have first offered the victim to God as a sign of their service and loyalty; then, secondly, they have somehow destroyed the victim to show that they were not going to take back for their own use what they had offered.

They always tried to offer God only the most perfect specimen as nothing but the best seemed fitting. However, they always felt that even the best was not worthy of God. They were never thoroughly satisfied until the perfect present arrived.

3. **The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.** The perfect present was Jesus Christ, Son of God, perfect because He was God. He sacrificed Himself on the Cross of Calvary, (an offering followed by death.) But He knew that only a few people would be present at that Sacrifice, and He wanted as many people as possible to be able to share in this great Act. He therefore arranged that it could be repeated over and over again. In this way the results of His Passion and Death are applied to our souls and He has put into our hands the opportunity to offer the perfect Sacrifice, that is, to give to God the Father, the perfect present, Himself, Jesus Christ.

4. **How His Sacrifice is in the Mass**

(a) *On Calvary*, Jesus offered Himself to His Father in a way that was full of bloodshed because His Body and Blood were at death really separated.

(b) *At the Last Supper*, the night before He died, Jesus offered Himself to His Father by first changing bread into His Body, then wine into His Blood, and so sacramentally indicating a separation of His Body and Blood, a living yet bloodless preview of what was going to happen the next day on Calvary.

(c) *At Mass*, the priest obeys Our Lord's command, "Do this in memory of me," and by the power of God does exactly what He did at the Last Supper. The only difference is that whereas the Last Supper looked forward, the Mass looks backward, to Calvary. What happened at the Last Supper, happened on Calvary, and happens every time a Mass is said.

5. **Why Catholics go to Mass**

(a) A Catholic goes to Mass because he knows that when he is at Mass the great Sacrifice of Jesus Christ made for the whole human race and for him as an individual, takes place before him. In essentials, the church in which he is present

becomes the mountain of Calvary; the altar of the church becomes the Cross of Christ.

- (b) A Catholic goes to Mass because the Mass is a Sacrifice and Sacrifice means giving a present to God. In the Mass, he gives to God the perfect present, His Son, Jesus Christ. He gives that present—
- (i) to give God the highest possible honour,
 - (ii) to thank God for all His kindness,
 - (iii) to make up to God for his sins,
 - (iv) to ask God for everything he needs for soul and body.

6. **The Structure of the Mass.** An appreciation of the structure of the Mass and its component parts is not easy. There are some Catholics who cannot properly identify the parts of the Mass, so the convert should not be disheartened if he is at first a little bewildered at the contents of this section.

The Masses said by the early Christian priests were shorter and simpler than Mass as it is said to-day. During the intervening centuries, there was a time when the Mass was much longer and contained more ceremonial. Over the lengthy period of nineteen hundred years, some ceremonies and prayers have been added, some have been lost, yet the basic structure of the Mass is the same now as it was in the first century and every century since.

In every Mass there are four distinct parts:

- A. Introduction.
- B. Offertory.
- C. Consecration (Sacrifice).
- D. Communion (Sacrament).

In the study of the following four paragraphs, it is essential for the convert to refer to a book containing the prayers of the Mass.

- A. *THE INTRODUCTION*, or fore-Mass lasts from the beginning to the Creed. This introductory part can be compared to the overture, played

before the curtain goes up at an opera. Its purpose is to put people in the appropriate frame of mind. It bridges the transition from worldly affairs and distractions to the Divine Mysteries about to be celebrated. Included in the Introduction are the following prayers:

Prayers at the foot of the altar—prayers of contrition.

The Introit*—Sets the theme of the Mass.

Kyrie Eleison—Lord, have mercy.

Gloria in Excelsis—A hymn of praise.

The Collect*—A collective prayer for help.

The Epistle*—Part of an Apostle's letter, taken from the New Testament.

The Gradual*—A transitional prayer leading to the Gospel.

The Gospel*—A small portion taken from the Life of Our Lord. Everyone stands for the Gospel, and the book the priest uses (the Missal) is moved from one side of the altar to the other.

The Sermon—Often an explanation or expansion of the Gospel.

The Creed—An act of Faith in God and His Revelation.

- B. *THE OFFERTORY* extends from the offertory anthem* to the prayer called the Secret.* It is called the Offertory because the priest, on behalf of the people, offers to God bread and wine, later to become the Body and Blood of Christ. This offering of material gifts is in a sense an offering of ourselves, our lives, to God. Just as the gifts of bread and wine will be changed, so too we hope our lives will undergo a similar transformation. Our work and suffering is symbolised by the bread; our leisure and joys by the wine.

*(The sections thus marked are those parts of the Mass which change from day to day. The other parts remain the same and are called "The Ordinary of the Mass.")

The priest first offers the bread ("Receive, O Holy Father . . . this host"). Then he puts wine and a drop of water into the chalice ("O God, who hast established . . .") which he then offers up ("We offer unto Thee, O Lord . . .") begs that we be accepted along with the gifts ("In a humble spirit . . .") and blesses the gifts ("Come, thou Sanctifier . . ."). Then he washes his hands saying a psalm as he does so ("I will wash my hands . . ."). This washing was once a practical measure after his acceptance of the people's goods for his upkeep. He then says a prayer to the Blessed Trinity ("Accept most Holy Trinity . . .") and turns towards the congregation to remind them to pray, that their sacrifice and his will be acceptable to God ("Pray, brethren that my sacrifice and yours . . ."). The Secret* prayer ends the Offertory. The name "Secret" comes from the Latin "Secreta" meaning "things put on one side". The things that have been put on one side are the bread and wine.

- C. *THE CONSECRATION.* This is the heart of the Sacrifice of the Mass, our opportunity to give infinite honour to God, thanksgiving for His love for us, reparation for our sins, and petition for all we need. A person attentively present at the Consecration and actively aware of what is happening is co-operating with the priest in an action more sublime and exalted than any other in the whole range of human activity.

The Preface ("It is truly meet and just . . .") opens this part of the Mass (called "the Canon"). A preface to a book tells you what it is about. This preface, being largely a hymn of thanksgiving and praise, implicitly contains the whole meaning and purpose of the Mass. All the prayers that follow in this part of the Mass are said silently by the priest. To indicate to

the congregation what stage he has reached, the bell is rung by the server at certain points. At the end of the preface the bell is rung for the first time.

The first prayer of the Canon is for the clergy and all believers, ("Therefore, most Gracious Father . . ."). The second is for particular people, friends, relations, those present. ("Be mindful O Lord . . ."). The third prayer ("In communion with . . .") unites the congregation with the Church Triumphant. At the end of this prayer, the bell is rung as a warning that the Consecration is imminent and the priest says the two prayers preparatory to the Consecration, ("This offering therefore . . ." and "Do Thou, O God . . ."). Then he bows low over the altar and holding the bread in his hands, he says the words of the Consecration. He then elevates the sacred Host for the adoration of the people. He does likewise with the Chalice.

The bell is rung six times in all.

The first three prayers after the Consecration, ("Wherefore O Lord . . .", "And upon these . . .", "Suppliantly we implore Thee . . .") are all prayers of offering. At the Offertory we offered something to God; now we offer SOMEONE, Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son. Then comes a prayer for the dead, ("Remember also, O Lord . . .") followed by a prayer for ourselves, ("To us sinners . . ."). The prayer that follows is actually a blessing of material things, in particular the material offerings which former congregations in pre-monetary days were in the habit of giving for the maintenance of the priests and distribution to the poor. The concluding prayer of this part of the Mass is the climax of the Canon. "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him" (Jesus Christ),

“is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory” (aloud he says) “for ever and ever, Amen.” As the priest pronounces these words, he makes a cross five times with the sacred Host over the Chalice. St. Justin, writing in A.D. 150 tells how the people used to give their vociferous assent to this prayer by a great and loud “Amen!”.

- D. *THE COMMUNION.* There must be a Communion at every Mass for it completes the Sacrifice. It is God's response to our Gift. Even if no one in the congregation receives Holy Communion (sometimes this happens if Mass is said at a late hour), the priest himself will always receive. The convert would do well to regard as his ideal receiving Communion, if at all possible, each time he comes to Mass. At least, he should consider the occasions when he comes to Mass and fails to receive Communion as exceptional, and not *vice versa*.

The first prayer said out loud after the Consecration, and the first prayer of this part of the Mass is the “Our Father”. The subsequent prayer (“Deliver us, we beseech Thee . . .”) is an expansion of the last phrase of the Our Father. After this prayer the priest breaks the Host into three portions. The origin of this rite (initiated by Our Lord at the Last Supper) lies in the fact that in order to give Holy Communion to the congregation in former days, it was necessary to perform this “breaking of Bread”. It took a considerable time, and throughout the ceremony the congregation sang the prayer which the priest now says: “Lamb of God,” (Agnus Dei) “who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, give us peace.” Great emphasis is laid on “peace” in this section of the Mass; the word

occurs six times. It can be regarded as referring to the personal peace which union with Christ in Holy Communion will bring, and the social peace which the Family of God should enjoy in partaking of and sharing in the one Food.

The three prayers that follow are in the singular, ("I" and "me" not "we" and "us") since they are each person's particular preparation for Holy Communion. Although Holy Communion is a social act, nevertheless Our Lord gives Himself completely to each individual, and should be desired by each and receive an individual welcome from each.

Just before giving himself Holy Communion, the priest says three times (and the bell is rung), "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." He repeats it again three times when he turns round with the Ciborium before going down to the Communion rails. As he places the Sacred Host on your tongue, he says, "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to life everlasting, Amen."

While you are saying your private prayers after Communion (as suggested in the previous chapter), the priest cleanses the Chalice, reads the Communion Verse* and Post-Communion*, gives his blessing and says the last Gospel. After Mass, the prayers said in English are for the conversion of Russia.

7. Your part in the Mass is by no means that of a spectator; by your very presence, you play a positive part in the Sacrifice. At the Offertory, the priest asks you to pray "that my Sacrifice and *yours*" be acceptable to God. Each time the priest says "Dominus Vobiscum"—"The Lord be with you"—(and he does so eight times) he is asking you for your collaboration in this great Act. You

will hear the Server answering the prayers of the priest. He is speaking on your behalf. (In some churches the whole congregation answers; this is called "the Dialogue Mass".)

8. **What to do during the Mass.** Above all, you go to Mass to pray, not just to sit and watch. More particularly, it is better for you to "pray the Mass" than simply to say prayers during the Mass. This means that, if possible, your prayers should correspond to the prayers being said at the altar by the priest. While it is conceivable that you might compose such corresponding prayers for yourself, this system would be very difficult. Obviously the best method is for you to read from a prayer-book a translation of the very prayers the priest is saying. By so doing you join your voice to the great chorus, the unanimous hymn of praise sung by the whole Church—Liturgical prayer. It is possible that a member of an orchestra may not understand or appreciate every note he plays, yet he still plays his part in producing the total magnificent effect. Likewise it may be that you will not understand the meaning of all the prayers, but by saying them you nevertheless enroll yourself as a member of this great Orchestra.

9. **Difficulties in following the Mass.** As we have suggested, it may not be easy at first to follow the prayers of the Mass.

- (a) The changeable parts (those marked above with an asterisk*) may confuse you.
- (b) The priest, having said more Masses than you perhaps will ever attend, has developed a facility in reading the prayers that may leave you far behind.

At first, you would be well-advised to disregard the variable parts of the Mass and simply try to follow the Ordinary, or unchanging part, as contained, for instance, in *The Simple Prayerbook*, or better still, a more simplified version of the Mass prayers if you can obtain a copy.

Your initial bewilderment will be replaced by a genuine pleasure at the feeling of participation which comes from following the prayers of the Mass.

10. Why in Latin ?

- (a) Latin is an international language; the Mass is therefore the same the whole world over.
- (b) Latin is a dead language, in the sense that its vocabulary is not developing, the meaning of the words does not change. Thus, the meaning of the Mass does not change from century to century.

11. Why the Vestments ?

- (a) To disguise the individual personality of the priest. Catholics are not interested in whether it is Fr. X or Fr. Y who says Mass. Cardinal or simple priest, young or old, famous or unknown, makes no difference. The fact that he is "a priest" is all that matters.
- (b) To link the Mass of to-day with the first Masses ever said, for the vestments the priest wears now were originally the every-day clothes of the early Christians.

These are the names of the vestments with their original use indicated in brackets: Amice (head-scarf/shawl), Alb (tunic), Cincture (belt), Maniple (handkerchief), Stole (scarf), Chasuble (overcoat).

12. Accessories of Sacrifice

The Altar—Reminiscent of the Last Supper Table, it is symbolic of Our Lord's Body—the reason why the priest kisses it often during Mass. It is covered with three white cloths.

The Altar-Stone—Contains a relic of a martyr, and so links Mass of to-day with those said in the catacombs on tombs of martyrs.

Chalice—The cup of gold and silver that contains the Precious Blood of Christ, between the Consecration and the priest's Communion.

Paten—A small concave plate used to hold the Host.

Corporal—A small square of linen placed on the altar on which rests the Sacred Host. (In Latin "corpus" means "body".) When not being used is kept in a wallet called a "burse".

Pall—A small linen cloth which covers the chalice.

13. The Liturgical Year. Throughout the year at Mass, the Church puts before her children the main events of Our Lord's Life, our Redemption.

Advent—The beginning of the Church's year, is the four weeks of penitential expectation of Our Lord's coming at

Christmas—Our Lord's Birth, Circumcision, the revealing of Himself to the gentile kings (the Epiphany). Several weeks after the Epiphany comes

Lent—Beginning on Ash Wednesday, it is the forty days of penance and preparation for

Holy Week—Which commemorates Our Lord's institution of the Blessed Sacrament, (Maundy Thursday), His Death (Good Friday), the anticipation (Holy Saturday) of His Resurrection (Easter Sunday.)

Easter (Paschal) Time—In the time after Easter, we are reminded of Our Lord's Ascension (Ascension Thursday) and the coming of the Holy Ghost (Whit Sunday or Pentecost). This Paschal time ends on Trinity Sunday, one week after Pentecost, after which occurs the solemn feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ.)

For the remainder of the year, till Advent again, the Sundays are numbered after Pentecost.

14. **Other Feast Days.** Parallel with the Liturgical Year described above, are the fixed feast-days, ("fixed" in so far as they occur on the same date each year.) Such a feast may celebrate one aspect of Our Lord's Life that is not included in the Liturgical Year (e.g. His Precious Blood—July 2nd) or it may have to do with Our Lady the Immaculate Conception—December 8th) or be commemorating the death of a saint (SS. Peter and Paul—June 29th.)

The priest's vestments are white if he says a Mass on a feast-day of Our Lord or Our Lady or a saint who was not a martyr. In general, red vestments are reserved for the feast of Pentecost, and the anniversaries of martyrs. Purple is indicative of penance, and so vestments of this colour are worn in Advent and Lent and on some eves of feasts. On the Sundays after Epiphany and Pentecost, the priest wears green vestments (symbolic of hope) and black is worn in Masses for the dead. Quite often during the year on those days when there is no anniversary of a saint, the priest will say a Mass for the Holy Souls. This is popularly called "A Black Mass".

15. **Mass Intentions.** Each time a priest says Mass he does so for a particular intention, for example, the soul of someone deceased, for the recovery of health, in thanksgiving. He does this at the request of his parishioners who ask him to say Mass for the special purpose they have in mind; if it is a private matter, they will simply ask him to say Mass "for a private intention". On the occasion of their request they give him a donation or stipend for his personal needs. The intentions for the Masses of the week are usually read out on Sunday before the sermon.

16. **Kinds of Masses.** In essence all Masses are the same, but there can be minor differences, either in ceremonial or purpose.

Low Mass—The every-day simple Mass with no additional ceremonies.

High Mass—The priest is assisted by two other ministers in Holy Orders (Deacon and Sub-deacon); candles are carried; incense is used; the choir sings parts of the Mass.

Sung Mass—Almost the same as a High Mass but without Deacon and Sub-deacon.

Nuptial Mass—Mass said on a wedding-day for bride and bridegroom, who kneel in the Sanctuary.

Requiem Mass—Mass for a dead person. Usually the body is present in the church. It is so-called because the first word in the Introit is "Requiem" ("rest").

17. It is the Mass That Matters

(a) The Universal Act of Worship. "Every minute of every day in one of the 140,000 Catholic churches all over the world a priest is saying Mass. Every Sunday, and on specified feast days, every Catholic must attend Mass. Every Catholic means one out of every six persons now alive on earth . . . Thus the Mass, always the same everywhere is the most universal of all the world's religious dramas." (*Life Magazine*, March, 1938.)

(b) It has survived persecutions—the first object of attack has always been the Mass, and so the priest. The tyrant has known that without the Mass, the Faith is unlikely to last long. (In England at the Reformation, the altar-stones were taken from their proper place and put in the floor of the porch so that worshippers would be forced to trample on this evidence of their old Faith.) Catholics can learn something from the importance which the enemies of the Church have always attached to the Mass, and still do.

(c) Catholics go to Mass, (notice how they say "go to Mass" more often than "go to Church"), and

they go in such large numbers that in many cities, despite the fact that there may be ten successive Masses in one morning, they have to queue to get in. This phenomenon is found only in Catholic churches and cannot be dismissed by saying "They are forced to go!"

They go out of love of God, not from fear, for they know that only through the Mass can they give adequate honour and glory to God.

Meanwhile the people sing two hymns in Latin:

I. O salutaris hostia

Quæ esæti panis esæti

Bella præsumit hostia

Da robur in auxilium

Qui tuus es dominus

St. spiritus es

Qui visus sine termino

Nobis donas in patris

Amen

O Saviour Victim, opening wide

The gate of Heaven to man below,

Our feet pass on from earth below

Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow

CHAPTER TEN

BENEDICTION

Benediction is neither a Sacrifice nor the administering of a Sacrament. It is a prayerful service to honour Our Lord really present on our altars, culminating in His Blessing. It usually takes place in the evening.

Very often the Rosary and the Litany of Our Lady (or other prayers—see “Novena” in Glossary,) begin this service. After these preliminary prayers the priest, vested in a garment called a Cope, opens and takes from the tabernacle the Sacred Host which he places in a receptacle called a monstrance (whose purpose is to make the Host visible to the congregation.) This he places in a prominent place on or behind the altar.

Meanwhile the people sing two hymns in Latin:

1. O Salutaris hostia
Quae caeli pandis ostium,
Bella premunt hostilia
Da robur, fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria
Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.

Amen.

Translation.

O Saving Victim, opening wide
The gate of Heaven to man below;
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great name be endless praise,
 Immortal Godhead, one in three;
 O grant us endless length of days
 In our true native land with thee.

Amen.

2. Tantum ergo, Sacramentum
 Veneremur cernui:
 Et antiquum documentum
 Novo cedat ritui;
 Praestet fides supplementum
 Sensuum defectui.

Genitori, Genitoque
 Laus et jubilatio
 Salus, honor, vitus quoque
 Sit et benedictio;
 Procedenti ab utroque
 Compar sit laudatio.

Amen.

Translation

Lowly bending, deep adoring,
 Lo! the Sacrament we hail;
 Types and shadows have their ending
 Newer rites of grace prevail;
 Faith for all defects supplying
 Where the feeble senses fail.

Glory, honour, might, dominion,
 Be unto our God most high;
 To the Father, Son and Spirit
 Ever blessed Trinity,

Praise be given, and power Eternal,
 Unto all Eternity.

Amen.

Priest: Panem de caelo praestitisti eis.
(Thou hast given them bread from Heaven).

People: Omne delectamentum in se habentem.
(Containing in itself every sweetness).

Priest: "O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy Passion, grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the Sacred Mysteries of Thy Body and Blood, that we may ever experience within us the fruit of Thy Redemption. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever."

People: "Amen."

A garment is put over the shoulders of the priest with the ends of which he holds the Monstrance while he makes a sign of the cross over the people. The bell is rung, and the people bow their heads for the blessing. Then the priest says twelve invocations which are repeated by the people. These are known as the Divine Praises.

"Blessed be God.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be His most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her Spouse most chaste.

Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints."

After this, the priest puts the Blessed Sacrament away, and the following hymn is often sung.

Adoremus in aeternum Sanctissimum Sacramentum.

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes; laudate eum omnes populi.

Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus: et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Adoremus in aeternum Sanctissimum Sacramentum.

Translation

Let us adore for ever the most Holy Sacrament.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

Because His mercy is confirmed upon us; and the truth of Lord remaineth for ever.

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.

Let us adore for ever the most Holy Sacrament.

A final hymn is then sung, such as this one to Our Lady:

Hail, Queen of heav'n, the ocean star,

Guide of the wand'rer here below:

Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy care—

Save us from peril and from woe.

Mother of Christ, star of the sea,

Pray for the wanderer, pray for me.

O gentle, chaste, and spotless Maid,

We sinners, make our prayers through thee;

Remind thy Son that He has paid

The price of our iniquity.

Virgin most pure, star of the sea,

Pray for the sinner, pray for me.

Sojourners in this vale of tears,

To thee, blest advocate, we cry:

Pity our sorrows, calm our fears,

And soothe with hope our misery.
 Refuge in grief, star of the sea,
 Pray for the mourner, pray for me.
 And while to Him Who reigns above,
 In Godhead One, in Persons Three,
 The source of life, of grace, of love,
 Homage we pay on bended knee;
 Do thou, bright Queen, star of the sea,
 Pray for thy children, pray for me.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OUR LADY

1. **Why give honour to Our Lady?** One of the first things a convert notices when he begins to attend Catholic services is the attention we pay to Mary. It is quite true: we do pay a lot of attention to her, and for three reasons.

(a) When God the Son decided to become a man with a Body like ours, He "needed" a Mother. He was in the unique position of being alive before His Mother, and He had the choice of all women of all time. His choice fell upon Mary of Nazareth.

(b) A Catholic service is being held in Mary's honour: flowers and candles round her statue, a hymn being sung. Suddenly, let us suppose, Our Lord is standing in our midst. Is He likely, do you think, to protest at the honour we are paying His own Mother?

(c) In honouring Mary, for whom God has done such wonderful things, we honour God Who gave her all these gifts.

2. **The gifts God has given to Our Lady**

(a) The Child Who was born of her was God. She is in truth, therefore, the *Mother of God*. Among the many titles given to Our Lady, this is the most glorious.

(b) *The Immaculate Conception*. God is to sin as white is to black, or hot to cold. Mary, who was to be so closely united to God, could not be allowed to be tainted even in the smallest way by sin. Not only did she commit no sins during

her life; she was born without even the stain of original sin on her soul.

- (c) *The Virgin Birth.* When the Angel came to Mary with the request that she become the Mother of God, Mary asked, "How shall this be for I know not man?" The Angel clearly indicated in reply that normal sexual relations would not be necessary for the conception of this Child: "The Holy Ghost will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee . . ."
- (d) *The Assumption.* At the end of her life, her body which had contained the Body of Jesus and from which His Body had been formed, was not allowed by God to corrupt in a grave. He took up (assumed) her body intact into heaven.
- (e) *Mother of all men.* Dying on the Cross, Our Lord bequeathed His best friend, John, to His Mother's maternal care. This last act of Christ has always been interpreted by the Church as His handing over to His Mother, not only John, but all men and women. In virtue of His last will, we are all entitled to regard her not only as Mother of God, but also as Mother of us.

3. **Why do we pray to her?** Our Lord performed His first recorded miracle—changing water into wine—at His Mother's request. It is difficult to imagine Him refusing His Mother anything. So we pray to her because:

- (a) We trust her to present our requests to her Son.
- (b) She is a human Mother with a human heart and human sympathy for our fears, hopes and sorrows.
- (c) We feel confident that if she presents our requests to her Son, He will not refuse her.

4. **Some prayers to Our Lady**

- (a) *The Hail Mary:* Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among

women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

The first sentence was spoken by the Angel at the Annunciation; the second by Our Lady's cousin, St. Elizabeth. The Church added the third sentence.

(b) Another very old prayer is the *Salve Regina*: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

(c) The best prayer to Our Lady is *The Rosary*. The words used in this prayer are the Our Father, the Hail Mary, said ten times, and the Glory be to the Father. This is called a mystery of the Rosary because we are thinking while we say it of a mystery (or event) in Our Lord's or Our Lady's life. There are fifteen such mysteries.

Joyful Mysteries: The Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Our Lord, the Presentation, the Finding of Our Lord.

Sorrowful Mysteries: The Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with thorns, Our Lord carrying His cross, the Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord.

Glorious Mysteries: The Resurrection, the Ascension, the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, the Assumption, the Coronation of Our Lady in Heaven.

5. **How best to say the Rosary.** Let us suppose you are saying the fifth sorrowful mystery, the Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord. Instead of trying to think of the meaning of the words you are saying, the normal rule for prayer, concentrate rather on making a picture in your mind of Our Lord being nailed to the cross. You may not be conscious of the Hail Marys slipping by (that is one of the reasons for using Rosary beads,) while your lips say the words, your imagination is presenting to you various pictures of Our Lord hanging on the cross. When the stream of pictures comes to an end, as it may do before you have reached the tenth Hail Mary, turn to the words and try to think of their meaning.

You need not expect to find that it is easy to say the Rosary well. But if you persevere, in time you will come to love it, and you will look on it as an old and reliable friend that never lets you down, no matter what your mood may be.

6. **The results of saying the Rosary.** Continued fidelity to your Rosary will give you,

- (a) A deepening of your Faith;
- (b) A gaining of many indulgences;
- (c) An intimate and personal friendship with Our Lord and Our Lady;
- (d) Although no one's salvation is certain, it is hard to see how, if you have said fifty times each day, "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death," you could lose your soul.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE RECEPTION OF A CONVERT

Although it is simple and short, you will undoubtedly find the ceremony of your reception into the Church very moving. It will not be trying, for apart from two witnesses, it is quite likely that there will be no one but you and the priest in the church at the time.

If you don't know two Catholics (of the same sex as yourself) who will be able and glad to stand as witnesses, the priest will find them for you.

You will all go to the Communion rails and kneel down. The priest will say alternately with you this hymn to the Holy Ghost:

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
From Thy bright heavenly throne
Come take possession of our souls
And make them all Thine own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete
Best gift of God above
The living Spring, the living Fire,
Sweet unction and true Love.

Thou who art sevenfold in Thy grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand.

O guide our minds with Thy blest light
With love our hearts inflame
And with Thy strength which ne'er decays
Confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our fiendish foe
 True peace unto us bring
 And through all perils lead us safe
 Beneath Thy sacred wing.

Through Thee may we the Father know
 Through Thee th' eternal Son
 And Thee the Spirit of them both,
 Thrice-blessed Three in One.

All glory while the ages run
 Be to the Father, and the Son
 Who rose from death, the same to Thee,
 O Holy Ghost, eternally. Amen.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray

O God, who hast taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the light of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

With your hand on the Missal, you will then make this profession of Faith.

"I, holding in my hand God's holy gospels and enlightened by divine grace, publicly declare that I accept the Faith which is taught by the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. I believe that Church to be the one true Church which Jesus Christ set up here on earth to which I make my submission with all my heart.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ His only Son Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sitteth at

the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

“I believe that seven Sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

“I believe that the Bishop of Rome is the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, that he is the supreme visible Head of the whole Church, and that he teaches infallibly what we must believe and do for salvation.

“I also believe everything which the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church defines and declares that we must believe. To her I give my whole allegiance and I reject every error and schism which she condemns.

“So help me, God, and these His holy gospels which I touch with my hand.”

Next, the priest will say a psalm asking for God's mercy.

“Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord:

Lord, hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities:

Lord, who shall endure it?

For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness:

And by reason of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.

My soul hath relied on His word: my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord.

Because with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption.

And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

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."

Then follows the Baptism. If you have definitely not been previously baptised, the priest will administer Baptism with the full ceremonies. If, however, it is only possible, but not certain, that you have previously been baptised, he will perform the very brief ceremony of conditional baptism.

You will then return to the Communion rails where the priest will absolve you from possible excommunication:

"By the authority of the Apostolic See committed to me for this purpose, I absolve thee from the bonds of excommunication which (perhaps) thou hast incurred, and restore thee to the holy Sacraments of the Church, to the communion and fellowship of the faithful. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

This is followed by the "Te Deum", a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of faith you have received.

After this ceremony you make your first Confession.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WAY AHEAD

1. **God's call to you** is a call to sanctity. In becoming a Catholic you are not simply being asked to come to Mass on Sundays and eat fish on Fridays. You are not simply being urged to avoid mortal sin. Your call is to a new life, a new romance. "Be ye perfect," Our Lord said, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is God's desire for you. He is asking YOU to be a saint.

2. **What is a saint?** To answer this question it is best, perhaps, to understand first of all what a saint is not. A saint is not a person who goes around with a sad face, condemning all forms of enjoyment. He is not necessarily one who imposes on himself great penances and austerities. He is not one who lives in aloof solitude.

A saint is essentially a happy person. Why? Because he is sure that God loves him and wants what is best for him. He knows that if he does what God wants him to do—God's will—though it may entail suffering and hardship, it will make him happy here as well as hereafter.

A saint is therefore one who puts the Will of God first and foremost in his life. He regards every other consideration, comfort, security, ambition, human respect, human love, as secondary to God's Will.

3. **What is God's Will?** It is expressed in various ways.

(a) In the Commandments of God and the Church. In obeying both, you are bound to be doing what God wants you to do. In disregarding either, you are necessarily disregarding the Will of God.

(b) In your state of life—by fulfilling its duties as well as you possibly can out of love for God. If you are a teacher or a bus-driver, then the Will of God for you is that you be as good a teacher, as good a bus-driver as you can be. If you are a wife and a mother, it is not God's Will that you be a medical missionary. All He asks is that you set your heart on being a good wife and mother not only for your husband and children, but for Him. Whatever your calling, He does not ask you to do extraordinary things. He asks you to do ordinary things extraordinarily well. Think of Our Lady—the greatest Saint. She sewed, she swept, she washed, she cleaned: ordinary things, but with what an intensity of love did she do them, out of love for her Boy, her Son, her God. That is the secret of all the saints.

(c) In other matters of importance. If, after you have asked yourself "What does God want me to do in this matter?" you are still in search of a sure answer, continued prayer and prudent advice will certainly, sooner or later, show you what truly is God's will.

4. **The Marks of a saint.** Just as the marks of the Church identify her as the true Church of Christ, so in every saint can be clearly perceived certain inherent marks or characteristics which constitute the essence of Sanctity. Three of the virtues most readily discernible are humility, charity, prayerfulness.

(a) *Humility.* Humility is truth. It means facing the reality that the talents I may possess have come from God; the good I may have done has been done because God gave me the Grace to do it; that if another had received similar graces he might well have responded more readily than I. Every saint has shown evidence of humility by a true

evaluation of himself in relation to God, by refusing to judge others, and by an uncomplaining acceptance of God's Will.

- (b) *Charity.* Love of all men without exception, a love, in particular, for the under-privileged, the despised, the deprived, for God's sake. St. Paul wrote these words: "I may speak with every tongue that men and angels use; yet if I lack charity, I am no better than echoing bronze, or the clash of cymbals. I may have powers of prophecy, no secret hidden from me, no knowledge too deep for me; I may have utter faith, so that I can move mountains, yet if I lack charity, I count for nothing. I may give away all that I have to feed the poor; I may give myself up to be burnt at the stake; if I lack charity, it goes for nothing. Charity is patient, is kind; charity feels no envy; charity is never perverse or proud, never insolent; does not claim its rights, cannot be provoked, does not brood over an injury; takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, but rejoices at the victory of truth; sustains, believes, hopes, endures to the last."

And St. John said, "God has proved His love to us by laying down His life for our sakes; we too must be ready to lay down our lives for the sake of our brethren . . . if a man boasts of loving God while he hates his own brother, he is a liar."

- (c) *Prayerfulness.* Humility may be considered the foundation of sanctity, charity as sanctity in action. Prayerfulness is the heart of sanctity, and can be defined as a readiness to turn to God at every possible moment. (The only moment when it is quite impossible to do so is the very moment of sin.) A saint does not regard prayer as a last resort; to him it is the first line of action.

The thoughts of a person in love continually revolve round the beloved. A saint, who is a person in love with God, finds his thoughts constantly turning to God.

A person sincerely and seriously trying to love God will regard prayers as of supreme importance. For it is by prayer that union with God is achieved, and union is the purpose and aim and fulfilment of all love.

* * *

"O God, who hast prepared for those that love Thee such good things as the eye of man cannot see : pour into our hearts such a sense of Thy love, that we, loving Thee in all and above all, may obtain Thy promises which exceed all that we can desire. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

GLOSSARY

ANGELUS : A prayer commemorating the Annunciation and Incarnation, said three times each day, morning noon and evening. It is called the Angelus because of the first word (in Latin) of the prayer. Here it is:

“The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary
And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord
Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary.

And the Word was made flesh
And dwelt amongst us.

Hail Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray :

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may, by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.”

ASHES : They are made by burning some of the palms of the previous Palm Sunday. On Ash Wednesday, which begins the penitential season of Lent, before Mass, the priest blesses ashes and, then makes a cross with them on the foreheads of the faithful saying, “Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.” It is a reminder to each person that the body, which will some day corrupt, must take second place to the soul in his daily concern.

ASPERGES : The name given to the ceremony performed before the principal Mass on Sundays. “Thou shalt sprinkle me”, (Latin: “Asperges”), “and I shall be cleansed,” says the priest, and he walks round the Church sprinkling the congregation with Holy Water. Two reasons: a ceremony of purification before participation in the Divine Mysteries; a reminder to the people of the waters of Baptism by which they are entitled to be associated with the great Sacrifice.

BANNS : The announcement in church for three consecutive weeks of a forthcoming marriage. The purpose of publishing the banns is to make sure that there are no unknown impediments which would invalidate or illegalise the marriage.

BEATIFICATION : See Canonization.

BLESSINGS : The Church has blessings for all sorts of persons and things; sick children, expectant mothers, cars, aeroplanes, to mention just a few. The prayer used in one form of blessing expresses the reason : " Oh God, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth thy blessing upon this _____ and grant that whosoever shall use it with thanksgiving, according to Thy law and will, may receive from Thee, through the invocation of Thy Holy Name, health of body and peace of soul. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

BREVIARY : In addition to the Mass there are other official (or liturgical) prayers of the Church. They are contained in a book called "The Breviary". All priests and some nuns are bound to say prayers from this book. Originally they were said at stated hours in the day and night; they still are in monasteries. That is the explanation of the nomenclature of the various sections of the day's prayer : Matins and Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, Compline. Next time you see a priest, on a journey, reading from a small black prayer book you will know he is saying "his office" (from "officium"—Latin for "duty"). He is one of the many thousands praying on your behalf.

CANDLEMAS : The feast of the Purification of Our Lady held on February 2nd. It commemorates the occasion when she, in obedience to the Jewish law, presented her Son in the temple for dedication to God. On this day the Candles are solemnly blessed in church and during the Mass held lighted as a symbol of the fact that Our Lord is the Light of the world.

CANON LAW : The book or code containing all the laws and regulations pertaining to the government and organisation of the Church.

CANONIZATION : This is the official procedure during which the Church investigates the claim to heroic sanctity

made for one of her deceased members and the eventual decision which declares that person to be a saint. The process is preceded by Beatification which gives to the person the title "Blessed" and confines the honour which may be paid to him to a limited area.

CATECHISM: The A, B, C, of Catholic doctrine drawn up in simple question and answer form, used largely in the instruction of Catholic children—and for that matter, of great value to adults.

CATHOLIC ACTION: Our Lord said, "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Catholics believe that theirs is the one fold with Christ at its head. Catholic Action is the effort, no matter how small, of any member of the Church, to extend this One Fold of Christ. This work is often most successfully done by organised groups; for example, The Legion of Mary, The Young Christian Workers, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Knights of St. Columba, etc. (These bodies, incidentally, always welcome new members.) The example of the individual living his Catholic life to the full at home and at work (e.g. in trade unions) plays a great, though probably unrecognized part, in achieving the aims of Catholic Action.

CHURCHING: The ceremony in which a mother, as soon after child-birth as is convenient, goes to the church and thanks God for her safe delivery. The priest says this prayer over her: "Almighty Everlasting God, who thro' the delivery of the Blessed Virgin hast turned the pains of the faithful at childbirth into joy, look mercifully on this Thy handmaid, who cometh in gladness to Thy holy temple to offer up her thanks: and grant that after this life, through the merits and intercession of the same Blessed Mary, she may prove worthy to obtain, together with her offspring, the joys of everlasting happiness. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

DISPENSATION: The relaxing by the Church of a Church law in a particular case for a sufficiently grave reason.

ENCYCLICAL: A letter from the Pope to all Bishops and their flocks.

FATIMA: A place in Portugal where Our Lady appeared in 1919 to three children. Her message: prayer and penance if the world is to be saved and peace secured. You will

occasionally hear mention in sermons of "Our Lady of Fatima".

FIRST FRIDAY : It is a private devotion in which many Catholics endeavour on the first Friday of nine consecutive months to receive Holy Communion in honour of the Sacred Heart. They do so as an act of reparation and in the prayerful hope that by this means God will enable them to die in a State of Grace.

HIERARCHY : This is a term descriptive of the ranks of authority and organisation in the Church. The Pope is the supreme authority. He has as a consultative body the Cardinals, some of whom reside in Rome looking after the Congregations (Ministries) responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Church. The Archbishops and Bishops throughout the world are responsible for the government of the area allotted to them by the Pope. They each have a group (or chapter) of Canons who, besides being parish priests, serve the (Arch) Bishop in a consultative capacity.

HOLY HOUR : In the garden of Gethsemani Our Lord turned sorrowfully to His sleeping Apostles and said, "Could you not watch one hour with me?" In most churches it is usual on occasions to have a Holy Hour—one hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The main motive is to make reparation—atonement—for our own indifference and the indifference of others.

HOLY WATER : Water blessed by a priest with the prayer that those who sign themselves with it may be protected by God. Catholics make the sign of the Cross with Holy Water as they enter church, not only to apply to themselves this intercession but also, by the symbolism of the act, to purify themselves in their approach to the Real Presence of Our Lord.

INCENSE : It is used for two distinct purposes. The first, as an act of adoration or veneration. So, for example, the incensing of the Blessed Sacrament at Benediction. The second, as a symbolic hallowing of things (ashes, palms, candles), or persons (the priest, and people at a High Mass.)

INDEX : A catalogue in which is listed the books which Catholics are forbidden to read, unless they receive special permission to do so. Most Catholics have never seen this

list. They know that a book against Faith or morals is automatically forbidden; there is no need for such to be placed "on the Index". In having such an Index the Church condemns those books which in a less obvious, more subtle way, are likely to undermine Faith or morals.

LAST RITES : Another name for the Last Sacraments. (See Extreme Unction.)

LOURDES : The place in France where in 1858 Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous (St. Bernadette) and now the greatest shrine of Our Lady in the world. Miracles have occurred frequently, and are attested by a panel of doctors of all denominations and of none. This panel, after searching investigation, has declared that in many cases, no natural causes could have produced such effects. Not all are cured (the proportion is small), nor do only sick people go to Lourdes. But all who have been there, sick and well, Catholics and non-Catholics, have been impressed by and grateful for their experience.

MISSION: A week or a fortnight of intense spiritual effort in a parish. One or two special preachers are invited to take over the services and spend much of their time visiting all the parishioners. The people of the parish, realizing that this is a time of grace, make a great effort to attend Mass and Benediction every day.

NOVENA : The term originates from the Latin "novem" meaning nine, here the repetition nine times of a particular prayer or service. Why nine? Perhaps because the Apostles spent nine days in prayer after the Ascension; on the tenth day the Holy Ghost came to them.

There is nothing superstitious about it; the repetition is indicative of perseverance in prayer which Our Lord Himself said would be rewarded. There are many and varied Novena services. Popular in England and the United States of America is the Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (Help) which in many churches precedes Benediction one evening each week.

PASTORAL LETTER : A letter written by a Bishop for his flock and read in all the churches of his diocese.

PETER'S PENCE : Money given by Catholics throughout the world for the upkeep of the Pope and the Vatican State.

One official collection is made each year. Very often the Pope gives generously from this source to victims of disaster, irrespective of creed or race.

PLAIN CHANT: A style of vocal music that can be regarded as the official form of singing in the Church. Musicians are all agreed as to its purity and great dignity. Though it may at first sound strange to ears accustomed to modern musical idiom, it rewards attention with ever increasing pleasure.

QUARANT ORE: Sometimes called Exposition, it literally means "forty hours". For approximately forty hours the Sacred Host is exposed (placed in view of all, as at Benediction). During the forty hours there is always someone in church "watching" before the Blessed Sacrament. Each parish has Quarant Ore once a year and parishioners use the occasion to implore more earnestly that God will bless their parish, their homes and their lives.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS or Congregations are associations of priests or nuns obeying a common rule, bound by the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, and working for a specific purpose. In general, one can divide religious orders into two main categories: Contemplative and Active. The Contemplative Orders have as their objective a life of prayer and meditation. The Active Orders have a specific external work as their aim, educational or medical, work for the destitute, orphans, the mentally defective, etc. It would be as difficult to give an exhaustive list of the varied works they do, as it would be to list all the religious orders, contemplative and active. Here are the names of a few: Benedictines, Carthusians, Cistercians, Christian Brothers, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, Redemptorists, (for men). Carmelites, Little Sisters of the Poor, Medical Missionaries, Poor Clares, Poor Servants of the Mother of God, Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Nazareth, Sisters of Notre Dame (for women.)

"RERUM NOVARUM": An encyclical written in 1892 by Pope Leo XIII. It is a succinct statement of the Church's teaching on social matters. Published at a time when trade-unions were hardly legal, child labour prevalent, dire poverty the lot of the majority, this letter from the Pope was many years ahead of contemporary social thought. While it reaffirmed the natural human right to own private property, it condemned economic systems which allowed wealth to

accumulate in the hands of the few and neglected the well-being of the many. It emphasised the desirability of trade-unions and codified the general principles by which capital and labour can assist each other.

RETREAT : A specified period, usually a week or a weekend, which Catholics spend in a monastery or convent, listening to sermons, meditating, and praying. It can be regarded as a time of spiritual stocktaking.

SECULAR CLERGY : In contrast to the Religious Orders, secular priests are not bound to community life and rule, nor the vow of poverty. The word "secular" means worldly in the sense that such clergy live in the world, not away from it. They can be regarded as the general practitioners of the Church, responsible for the unspectacular daily work of running a parish and meeting the manifold problems that a parish is capable of producing. Priests of the Religious Orders, on the other hand, may be regarded as specialists in one or more particular field: preaching, teaching, etc. However, the two are not exclusive; many seculars are specialists, many religious do parochial work.

SEMINARY : The college where priests receive their training. The basic and minimum period of training is six years, but this presupposes a certain standard of education, in particular, a working knowledge of Latin. In many cases, boys at the age of twelve begin this training and for them the course lasts thirteen years. It is obvious that many of these boys will decide that God is not calling them to be priests and they leave the college with no recriminations from their superiors. A boy or young man from a poor family need have no hesitation in asking to be a priest for his education will be largely paid for by the Ecclesiastical Education Fund, for which a collection is made once a year in every church of a diocese.

SICK CALL : When a Catholic is ill and it appears that he may be in some danger, he sends for the priest. If the danger is sudden and serious he will not hesitate to send for the priest at any time of the day or night. When a Catholic, even though he is in no danger, cannot come to Mass because of sickness, infirmity or old-age, if the priest is informed, he will gladly bring Holy Communion to the sick person. If you are in charge, this is how you prepare. On a table near the bed put a white cloth, crucifix, two candles, a wine-glass half

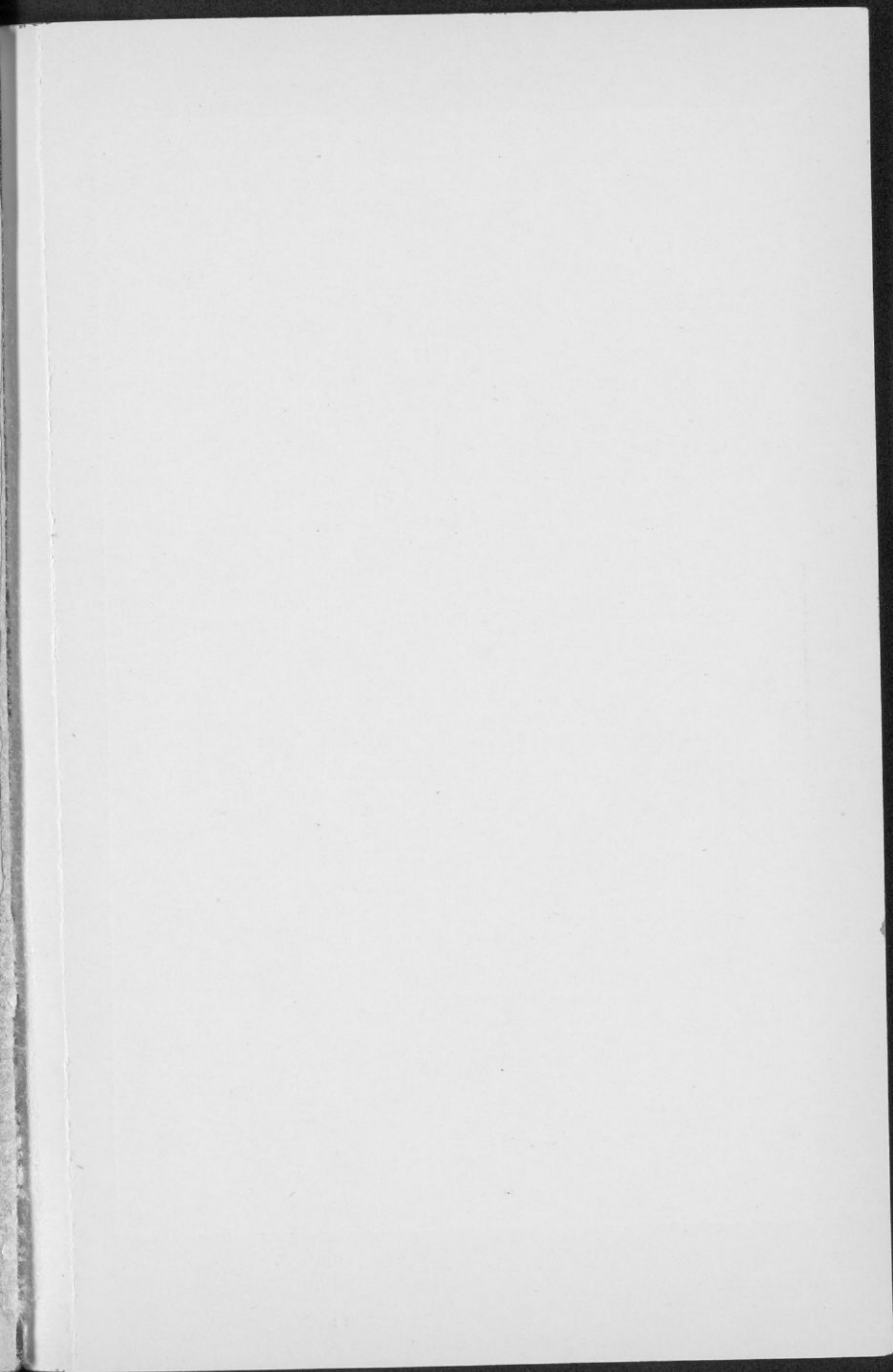
full of drinking water. Light the candles a few minutes before the priest is due; and meet him at the door, lead him to the sick room, putting the candle back on the table. Probably the priest will hear the invalid's confession, so leave the room and return only when the priest indicates that you are to do so.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION : The following prayer explains what it is: "My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love Thee above all things and I desire to possess Thee within my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace Thee as being already there and unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee."

STATIONS OF THE CROSS : Fourteen pictures round the walls of Catholic churches depicting the sufferings of Our Lord on His way to Calvary, His Crucifixion, His Death and Burial. Catholics go from picture to picture ("making the Stations") thinking of the meaning of each and saying some such prayer as, "We adore Thee, O Christ, and praise Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

SURPLICE : The white garment worn by the server(s) at Mass. The longer black garment he wears is called a Cassock.

VIATICUM : The name for Holy Communion when it is given to a dying person. Literally, it means "food for a journey"—Food for the last journey from here to eternity.



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