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# THE LITURGICAL YEAR

REV. LEON A. McNEILL  
ANNE A. DEXTER



THE CATHOLIC ACTION SERIES  
OR  
DISCUSSION CLUB TEXTBOOKS

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THE CATHOLIC ACTION SERIES

*of*

DISCUSSION CLUB TEXTBOOKS

# THE LITURGICAL YEAR

An Explanation of the Cycles, Seasons, and Feasts of the  
Ecclesiastical Year

BY

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*Offered to*  
*Mary Immaculate*  
*Mother of Christ*  
*and of*  
*All Christians*

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## Introduction

The Liturgical Year is the third unit in a series of discussion club textbooks on the liturgy published by the Catholic Action Committee of the Diocese of Wichita. *Altar and Sanctuary* offers an exposition of the externals of divine worship, and provides a psychological approach to a study of the prayers and ceremonies of the holy Sacrifice as embodied in *Praying the Mass*, the second number in the series. The present textbook explains the cycles, seasons, and feasts of the ecclesiastical year. An endeavor has been made to present the subject briefly and simply, and to limit the treatment to those points an understanding of which will foster true devotion and nourish the interior life of the soul.

Those who wish to share most abundantly in the supernatural life, must not only understand the holy sacrifice of the Mass in itself as the re-presentation of the bloody immolation on Calvary, and be able to pray the Mass in union with the celebrant at the altar; they must also rightly understand, deeply appreciate, and fruitfully observe the seasons and feasts of the ecclesiastical year, in which the mysteries of Christ are reenacted and in which the special grace of each mystery is imparted anew to the members of the Mystical Body. We trust that this little manual may be the means of bringing at least a few devout souls to this more fruitful participation in the sacred mysteries.

We owe a debt of sincere filial gratitude to His Excellency, the Most Rev. Aug. J. Schwertner, D. D., for his constant encouragement and support in the development of these discussion club textbooks. May we also express our heartfelt thanks to Rev. Richard J. Dei, Censor Librorum, for conscientious and helpful examination of copy; to our numerous loyal coworkers in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine throughout the Diocese of Wichita; and to the thousands of members of religious discussion clubs, at home and abroad, who have given us their encouragement and cooperation by making use of the textbooks in our Catholic Action Series.

May Christ the Head, Who shows Himself as our Model in the mysteries of His earthly life, communicate to us, the members of His Mystical Body, the unsearchable riches of His grace through the celebration of these same mysteries in the sacred liturgy of the Church.

### THE AUTHORS

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

February 11, 1937

## The Discussion Club

### ORGANIZATION

1. A discussion club should ordinarily consist of from eight to twelve members. If a greater number of persons are interested, two or more groups may be formed.

2. In addition to a leader, a secretary should be elected by the members or appointed by the presiding officer of the organization within which the club is being formed.

3. The parish priest or some other member of the clergy should be invited to act as spiritual director or moderator of the club.

### DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The leader should preside at all meetings.

2. The leader, or some member of the club appointed by the leader, should guide the informal discussion, using the outline which appears at the end of each chapter. He should keep the discussion within the limits of the day's study, and at the close of the session give a brief review of the points covered in the lesson.

3. The secretary should call the roll, keep a brief record of the meetings, and perform other duties belonging to the office.

4. The spiritual director or moderator need not attend all the meetings, but he may encourage the members and show his interest by occasional visits. When a question arises which cannot be answered correctly by the members of the club, it should be referred to the spiritual director.

### MEETINGS

1. Meetings should be held weekly in the homes of the members, in the parish hall, or in a classroom of the parish school.

2. Meetings should start promptly and close on time, begin and end with prayer, and continue not longer than an hour and a half.

### HOW TO USE THE TEXTBOOK

1. The material is presented in nine chapters each of which is conveniently divided into two parts, making a total of eighteen short lessons. If the first eight lessons are covered during the fall term, they will serve as a preparation for the Christmas cycle; and if the remaining ten lessons are taken in the spring term, they will virtually coincide with the Easter cycle. The study of a particular liturgical season during the time in which it is actually being celebrated has many practical advantages. If, however, the group so desires, an entire chapter may be covered at each meeting.

2. Every member of the club should be provided with a textbook and should read the lesson selected for study before the meeting.

3. Special attention should be given to the outlines which follow the chapters. These questions and projects will encourage discussion and emphasize points to be remembered. The outlines will be found helpful, not only as an aid to discussion, but also in the preparation of the lesson.



4. Each discussion group should be provided with a Missal, a daily Missal if possible, in order to have ready access to the Epistles and Gospels and other Mass prayers which are suggested for reading and special study. Sunday Missals may be purchased in lots at a price of 15c to 20c each.

5. Books, magazine and newspaper articles, pictures and other illustrative materials which have a bearing on the lesson ought to be brought to the attention of the club. It is suggested that clippings and pictures be preserved in a club scrap book.

### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1. A suitable name should be selected for the club. The practice of placing religious studies under the patronage of the saints is in keeping with Catholic ideals.

2. Occasional lectures or informal talks by members of the clergy or the laity on certain phases of the liturgy, or any of the subjects touched upon or suggested in the text, will stimulate interest and widen the field of study. These activities should not, however, be promoted at the expense of the regular club programs.

3. At the close of the club season, a joint meeting of the study groups of the parish or of several parishes may be arranged. Pageants, plays, tableaux, illustrated lectures, travel talks, or any other suitable program may be planned by a central committee composed of representatives of all the groups taking part.

4. "The Life of Christ in Pantomime and Dramatization," published by the St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J., suggests tableaux, pantomime readings, and miracle groups which fit admirably into a program of this nature.

### REFERENCES

The books, pamphlets, and magazines included in the reference list are especially recommended for research and supplementary reading on such subjects as the externals of Christian worship, the Mass, the liturgical year, and the general field of the liturgy.

### ORDER OF MEETING

Meeting called to order.

Prayer.

Roll call.

Reading of secretary's report.

Informal round table discussion.

Summary of lesson by the leader.

Reports on supplementary reading.

Assignment of lesson for the next meeting.

Prayer.

Meeting adjourned.

## PRAYER TO THE HOLY GHOST

Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of the faithful:  
and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created

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

Let us pray

Oh God, Who hast taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost, give us by the same Spirit a love and relish of what is right and just, and the constant enjoyment of His comforts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hail Mary

*“Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent and ending with the last Sunday after Pentecost, the liturgical seasons move in harmonious sequence, seasons of inward recollection and of self-denial, of spiritual exaltation and of joyful commemoration, moving forward with no abrupt transitions, without any tumult of aims and motives, but in stately order, in solemn procession, forming and perfecting life continuously throughout weeks and months according to one supreme idea which is brought home to us again and again in a rich variety of images and expressions. At the time of the winter solstice, when the sun begins to mount upward again, the liturgy bids us celebrate the dawn of our redemption in the incarnation of the Son of God. In spring-time, when nature is stirred by the sun’s warmth to renewed life, we are made ready by the Lenten season to keep our festival of Easter, to experience the new life of the risen Christ whose resurrection is ours also. And when the heat of the summer ripens all the fruit of the earth’s bosom, the Pentecostal radiance of the Holy Spirit streams forth upon mankind, bringing the mysteries of the Lord to maturity throughout His realm on earth, until the day of the harvest when He will come again to gather the wheat into His barns.”*

JOHANNES PINSK, IN *Divine Worship*.

## I

## Origin and Divisions of The Liturgical Year

## PART I

The liturgy is the expression or manifestation of the very life of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Its general purpose is twofold, namely: “. . . the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful.”<sup>1</sup>

In our previous studies of the liturgy we explained the externals of sacrificial worship and the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass. We learned that interior sentiments are expressed by the use of vestments, light, color, and incense; and by such ceremonies as the sign of the cross, the act of kneeling, and various other bodily postures. Actions are, of course, secondary to the spoken word, but the sublime prayer-formulas of the holy Sacrifice acquire additional emphasis and fervor by the action or gesture that accompanies them. Thus all things through the agency of the liturgy conspire to the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.

**Time in the Liturgy:** We are now about to consider another division of the liturgy which takes into account the significance of time in sacrificial worship. This system of measuring time which is to be exchanged for eternity is called the ecclesiastical or church year. Since the liturgy is the public worship of the Church, it is necessary that certain definitely fixed days and seasons be set apart for the performance of special religious observances.

**The Jewish Ritual:** The ecclesiastical year has been, like the liturgy itself, a gradual development, following to some extent the ancient Jewish ritual. The celebration of the Jewish week and the Sabbath rest that came with the end of it, as well as the festivals which were kept in remembrance of the benevolent and gracious acts of God, were governed by strict laws. The Pasch or Passover, the liberty day of the Hebrews, together with the harvest festival with which the Paschal season closed, have been carried over from the Old Testament. They remain with us today as two of the greatest feasts of the Church — Easter and Pentecost. The descent of the Holy Ghost occurred during the Jewish Pentecost.

**Christian Feasts and Pagan Festivals:** Attempts to trace certain Christian festivals to pagan practices have been made, but without success. The early Church did, on occasion, institute feasts in honor of the sacred mysteries of our Lord and in honor of the saints in order to supplant degrading heathen celebrations, just as missionaries laboring in pagan lands today emphasize devotion to patron saints for the purpose of discouraging the people from taking part in popular festivals held in connection with the worship of local deities.

**Civil Year and Church Year:** The divisions of our civil calendar were introduced to most Catholic countries by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Before that time little or no distinction was made between the civil year and the church year. But with the adoption of the Gregorian system of reckoning time, ecclesiastical authorities began to plan a permanent arrangement of the familiar feasts and seasons which for so many centuries had been faithfully observed in the celebration of the Mass and other liturgical functions.

1. *Motu Proprio on Sacred Music*, Pius X, Nov. 22, 1903.

**Apostolic Origin:** Properly speaking, the ecclesiastical year originated in apostolic times when the early Christians substituted Sunday for the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest. Certain days and seasons were set apart to remember and re-present the great mysteries of redemption—the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. Later, and quite naturally, the “heavenly birthdays” of the martyrs were commemorated by public and liturgical functions which were in keeping with the mortuary customs of the time.

**Liturgical Cycles:** The Church continues to emphasize these themes in two liturgical cycles: the temporal cycle (Proper of the Season) which observes the events in the life of Christ, and the sanctoral cycle (Proper of the Saints) which honors the saints who by their sufferings have merited heaven and the friendship of Christ. The Church re-presents and re-enacts the sacred mysteries of Christ’s life here on earth annually through the liturgical year. In recalling these mysteries, and in giving homage to the saints, she offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass. **The Mass is always offered to the three Persons of the most holy Trinity, but it is frequently celebrated in the name of the saints** whose past merits and present prayers are made more efficacious when they are offered to God united to the merits of His divine Son. Another reason why the saints, especially the martyrs, should be commemorated in the Mass, is that their deaths resemble the death of our Lord; their martyrdoms continue the martyrdom of Christ.

**Sunday:** The substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath, the last day of the week, was not the arbitrary breaking away from an established custom, as is sometimes supposed. In the days of the apostles, the Christians, although they were not bound by the Mosaic law, continued to gather in the synagogue on the Sabbath for evening prayer. Afterwards, they “. . . assembled to break bread;”<sup>2</sup> that is, they formed into groups to celebrate the Mass in their homes. Since the Sacrifice was preceded by the singing of psalms, readings from the Scriptures, and a sermon, it was not actually offered until the early hours of Sunday morning. In this way, the first day of the week came to be regarded as the “Lord’s day,” and was consecrated in a special way to the public worship of God by the celebration of Mass and the resting from servile work.

In the early part of the fourth century, the practice of attending Mass on Sunday seems to have become a matter of ecclesiastical legislation as evidenced by a decree of the Council of Elvira: “If anyone in the city (probably the former city of Illiberis, Spain) neglects to come to Church for three Sundays, let him be excommunicated for a short time so that he may be corrected.”

**Sunday in the Liturgy:** Sunday was also given a special significance in the liturgy because it was regarded as sanctified by acts of the three divine Persons. It was recalled that God the Father began the work of creation on the first day of the week; God the Son arose from the dead on Easter Sunday; and God the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles on Pentecost Sunday. Consequently, on all Sundays of the year except those occurring in Lent and Paschaltide, the Preface of the Holy Trinity is recited or sung in the Mass. In the early Church and in the mind of the liturgy today, every Sunday celebrates the memory of our Lord’s resurrection. That the day is still regarded as a “little Easter” is shown by the absence of penitential practices, such as fasting. Because of its universal festive nature, Sunday is never designated as a day of fast or abstinence.

2. Acts XX, 7.

**The Liturgical Week:** The Jewish week which was reckoned from one Sabbath to the next, was a sacred institution. The Sabbath rest, imposed by the command of God and always strictly observed, distinguished the "chosen people" from all other nations.

The Jews did not give names to the days of the week, but the Romans identified each day with the influence of one of the seven planets known to them, and named the days accordingly. Today we have the Teutonic equivalents of these Latin names.

In the language of the Church the week days were simply designated as *ferias*—free days on which, originally, Mass was not celebrated. It was the custom for the Pharisees to fast on Monday and Thursday. The early Christians observed the fast on Wednesday, because that was the day on which Judas bargained with the chief priests and magistrates for the betrayal of our Lord, and again on Friday in memory of Christ's death on the cross.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**Ember Days:** The *Embertides* are so ancient that little is actually known of their origin. It is generally believed that they were instituted by the early Church to replace heathen nature-festivals which were held in Rome at certain times during the year to invoke the favor of the gods on agricultural pursuits.

The first festival occurred in June during the time of the harvest, the next came in September when the grapes and olives were being gathered, and the last one took place in December to insure the fertility of the seeds. The Church retained the festivals but gave them a Christian character. Instead of the feasts she substituted three days of fasting and prayer with the intention of dedicating the seasons to God, and in turn asking Him to bless the earth with abundant harvests. The spring *Embertide* which is now observed in Lent is a later addition to the liturgy.

**Ordinations:** Ordinations to the priesthood usually took place at Christmas or Easter, but Pope St. Leo the Great, about the middle of the fifth century, permitted their transference to the Saturday of Ember week. Saturday, therefore, became the most solemn of the Ember days because of the new laborers (priests) that were brought into the Church for the spiritual harvest.

**Origin of Name and Arrangement of *Embertides*:** The word *ember* comes from the Anglo-saxon "ymbren" which meant a period or season. The Ember days are also designated as "*Quarter Tenses*" or four times. The present arrangement of Ember weeks was established by Pope Gregory VII (1078). They occur on the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (1) after the first Sunday of Lent, (2) after Pentecost Sunday, (3) after the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, and (4) after the feast of St. Lucy, December 13. One need know little Latin to make use of the old memory device:

"Post crux, post lux,

Post ignes, post cineres." 3

3. After Cross, after Lucy, After fire, after ashes.

**The Liturgical Year:** The present arrangement of the liturgical year is of comparatively recent origin since it dates from the sixteenth century when the Council of Trent adopted the new Roman Breviary and Missal. The observance of this universal code was imposed upon all churches which were not following a calendar that had been in use for two hundred years or more. There have been many revisions and modifications of the liturgical calendar since that time, owing to the introduction of new feasts.

**Divisions:** The ecclesiastical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent and ends on the Saturday which follows the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost. It is composed of two calendars of feasts and observances which run simultaneously. They are the temporal cycle and the sanctoral cycle.

**The Temporal Cycle:** The first and most important, since it re-presents the life of our Lord and the mysteries of redemption, is called the temporal cycle or the proper of the time. The temporal cycle is in turn made up of two other periods: the Christmas cycle and the Easter cycle. "Both of these are subdivided into: time before, during, and after these two great feasts, which have for aim to prepare the soul for them, to allow it to celebrate them with solemnity, and then to prolong them during several weeks."<sup>4</sup> The temporal cycle includes virtually all of the movable feasts.

**The Sanctoral Cycle:** The sanctoral cycle, or proper of the saints, is composed of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the angels, the apostles, martyrs, and all the saints, whose lives have reflected the perfections of Christ. "In asking them to intercede for us before the Almighty, it is none other than God Whom we really invoke . . . Far from detracting, then, from the worship due to God and to the Incarnate Word, devotion to the saints confirms it and carries it out in all its fullness."<sup>5</sup>

A third cycle, which in modern times has been built around the feast of Pentecost, lacks historical foundation. "The popular distinction of three liturgical cycles is not correct, for Pentecost week is expressly mentioned in liturgical books as the end of Eastertide."<sup>6</sup>

**Calendar Reform:** The movable feasts which dominate the temporal cycle have always presented difficulties both in ecclesiastical circles and civil departments. Proposals are being advanced from time to time advocating a reformed, stabilized calendar. The two most feasible schemes which have been presented offer a twelve-month, equal quarter plan, and a thirteen-month, twenty-eight day plan. The former seems to be more practical from a liturgical point of view. Under such an arrangement the church year would begin on December 3, the first Sunday of Advent, while Pentecost Sunday would fall on May 26. Christmas would always be celebrated on Monday; Ascension Thursday would be May 16. These dates are quite in keeping with the traditional and historical background of the ecclesiastical year.

Many agencies are now working for calendar reform. One authority writing on the subject says: "If it can be adopted by the Church and adapted to her liturgy without essential difficulty and with many advantages both for herself and the world in general, then members of the Church should be the first to advocate it. If it offers insuperable obstacles, or should be combatted for any good reason whatsoever, then the opposition should begin now. It will be too

4. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. VI.

5. The Spiritual Life, Tanqueray, p. 80.

6. Catholic Liturgics, Stapper-Baier, p. 95.

late to offer objections if we ever come to a point where the state imposes a calendar upon everybody." 7

There seems to be little doubt but that in time the civil calendar will be re-arranged to keep pace with the present-day idea of efficiency and progress. It will be difficult to bring about this reform and to make it world-wide without the cooperation of the Church. The matter of changing a few familiar dates is immaterial. It is the everlasting mysteries which these dates commemorate and our share in their re-enactment that make every year on earth of such permanence in heaven.

**School of Christian Perfection:** An important point that should be kept in mind while following this course of study is that the liturgical year is a school of Christian perfection. The Mass has been aptly called a catechism whereby the Church teaches her moral precepts and divine truths during the course of the ecclesiastical year. Pope Pius XI has well said that the splendors of the liturgy as exemplified in divine services are more efficacious than documents in instructing the people and raising them to spiritual and interior joys. We quote from his encyclical "Quas Primas" of December 11, 1925, on Christ the King: "People are better instructed in the truths of faith and brought to appreciate the interior joys of religion far more effectively by the annual celebration of the sacred mysteries than by even the weightiest pronouncements of the teaching Church. For such pronouncements reach only the few, and these generally the more learned, whereas all the faithful are stirred and taught by the celebration of the feasts; pronouncements speak only once; celebrations speak annually, and as it were continuously: pronouncements affect the mind primarily; celebrations have a salutary influence on the mind and heart, i. e., on the whole man. Since man is composed of body and soul, he has need of being moved and stimulated by the external solemnities of festivals. And such is the variety and beauty of the sacred rites, that he will drink more deeply of divine truths, will assimilate them into his very flesh and blood, and will make them a source of strength for progress in his spiritual life."

**Studying the Mass-Texts:** In order to learn the lessons which the school of the liturgical year has to offer, discussion club members should pay particular attention to the Mass-texts themselves, especially the Epistles and Gospels for the Sundays and holydays of obligation and for the great feasts of the sanctoral cycle. The majority of the laity comes in contact with the liturgical year only through the celebration of the Mass.

At the close of each club session, the members may wish to spend a brief period in a study of the proper parts of the Mass which will be celebrated on the Sunday which is to follow. If a holyday of obligation or a major feast day occurs within the week, the Mass-texts for these days should also be made a subject of comment.

It will be necessary to refer to the Missal for this part of the program. 8

The theme or keynote of the feast or season which is being celebrated is indicated in the Introit and other parts of the Mass; Christ's teachings are found in the Epistles and Gospels, while the particular grace or petition for which the Church prays, is set forth in the Collect, the Secret, and the Postcommunion.

7. Calendar Reform and the Liturgy, Schwegler, *Orate Fratres*, Sept. 8, 1934, p. 463.

8. With *Mother Church*, Michel-Stegmann, and *The Mind of the Missal*, Martindale, two books mentioned in the Reference List, give an explanation and a running commentary on the actual Mass-texts.

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

## PART I

1. What is the two-fold purpose of the liturgy? Discuss the value of externals in Christian worship, and tell why certain actions add emphasis to public prayers.
2. Is there any particular spiritual significance given to the days and seasons of the ecclesiastical year?
3. Does the ecclesiastical year have any similarity to the observances of the ancient Jewish ritual? Explain. To what Old Testament festivals can we trace two of our greatest feasts?
4. What may be said about attempts that have been made to trace Christian feasts to pagan festivals?
5. How did the introduction of the Gregorian calendar system in the sixteenth century influence the arrangement of the liturgical year?
6. What circumstances indicate that the liturgical year really originated in apostolic times?
7. What theme is emphasized in the temporal cycle? the sanctoral cycle? Explain how our Lord and the saints are honored in the celebration of the Mass.
8. What brought about the substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath? What legislation was made by the Council of Elvira in regard to attending Mass on Sunday?
9. Why has Sunday always had a special significance in the liturgy? How does the liturgy indicate that Sunday is still regarded as a "little Easter"?
10. How was the week reckoned by the Jews? Who named the days of the week? How was it observed by the early Christians?

## PART II

11. Discuss the origin of the Ember-tides. How did the Church give them a Christian character? Why is Saturday considered the most solemn of the Ember days?
12. Trace the origin of the word 'ember' and give the present arrangement of the four Ember weeks.
13. Give some facts concerning the present arrangement of the liturgical year. When does the church year begin and end and how is it divided?
14. What is the temporal cycle and how is it divided?
15. Give the principal classifications of the feasts of the sanctoral cycle. How does devotion to the saints give honor to God? Why is it incorrect to refer to Pentecost and the feasts that center around it as the Pentecost cycle?
16. Give your personal views in regard to the advantages of a stabilized calendar?
17. From a liturgical point of view, why would a twelve-month equal quarter plan of calendar reform seem to meet the approval of Church authorities?
18. What does one writer on the subject have to say about calendar reform?
19. Why would it be difficult to secure world-wide adoption of a stabilized calendar without the sanction and cooperation of the Catholic Church?
20. What important point should be kept in mind in regard to the study of the liturgical year? Read the quotation from the encyclical "Quas Primas."
21. How should the Mass-texts be used in the study of the ecclesiastical year?
22. In what part of the Mass do we find the keynote or theme? the teachings of our Lord? the petition or grace prayed for?



## II

# Living in Christ

### PART I

The church year is defined in the Liturgical Catechism as “the annual celebration of the mysteries of man’s salvation and of the memory of the saints.”<sup>1</sup> Yet many of us are accustomed to regard the recurring pageant of the Church’s liturgy merely as a memorial of the life of Christ as it is related in the Gospels.

At Christmas we tenderly recall the circumstances of our Lord’s birth in a stable at Bethlehem, while on Easter Sunday, after the harrowing memory of the crucifixion on Good Friday, we rejoice that He arose gloriously from the tomb. We take delight in the music, the splendid vestments, the richly adorned altars, and the perfection of the symbolic ritual of a festive Mass. If, however, our celebration of the mystery is only a pious commemoration—a memorial of an event that is past—we lack an understanding of the nature of the sacred liturgy and fail to participate in the special and abundant graces which are made available to us.

**CHRIST LIVES AGAIN:** The liturgical year is not just a memorial of the past; it is the actual re-enactment of the mysteries of the life of Christ. When our Lord was on earth, He lived, suffered and died, and then arose from the tomb in His own divine Person. Today, through the agency of the liturgy, He is joined to every member of His Church in a mystical reliving of these same events. The scenes and events in the life of Christ become **contemporary and immediately present** through the sacrifice of the Mass and other liturgical functions by which the current festival or season of the Church year is observed.

**THREE PHASES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST:** In order to understand how Christ lives again through the liturgical year, it is necessary to remember, as Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen points out, that there are three phases in the complete life of Christ: His earthly life, His glorified life, and His mystical life.<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, His mystical life which is annually re-presented by the members of the Church—the Mystical Body in which He lives.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is not new; it is as old as the Church herself. Christ’s earthly life began with His birth in the stable in Bethlehem; His glorified life began with His resurrection from the dead; and His mystical birth took place in the Cenacle in Jerusalem when the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles on Pentecost Sunday.

**THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES:** After the Last Supper, as our Lord was discoursing with His apostles, He anticipated the mystical life in which they would be reunited, when He promised: “I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.”<sup>3</sup> As He walked with them towards the Garden of Olives, His eyes must have beheld the vineyards along the way; He may have called His apostles’ attention to the strong vines with their hardy branches, as He said: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

1. Liturgical Catechism, MacMahon, p. 195.

2. Mystical Body of Christ, Sheen, p. 19.

3. John XIV, 18.      4. John XV, 4, 5.

Christ called Himself a vine, and His apostles the branches; this designation applies to all the members of the Church. They form one plant working together to produce fruit. As the branches depend upon the vine for their life and nourishment, so the members of the Church must be united by grace—ingrafted—to Christ; they must abide in Him to gain eternal life. For He says again: "If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth."<sup>5</sup>

**CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE MYSTICAL BODY:** St. Paul uses the expressive image of the body to explain the close relationship of Christ and the Church. "Christ is the Head, and His Church is His Body. Christ, the Head, is in Heaven. We know that our own bodies are made up of millions of tiny particles which are called cells. All these cells are fed on the same food. Now, Christ's Mystical Body is composed of millions and millions of human beings, the members of His Church. He nourishes them all on the same food—the Holy Eucharist. The cells of the body work for the good of the whole body. In the same manner, the millions of Christians who are members of Christ's Mystical Body (His Church) labor for the good of the whole. Christ's Mystical Body is a **growing** body. It will not attain its full growth until the work of redemption is finished—the time when no more souls will be created, and when all the members of Christ's Body will be united with Him (the Head) in Heaven."<sup>6</sup>

**MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS:** Since we are all united in Christ, it naturally follows that every one who has been incorporated into the Mystical Body, through the Sacrament of Baptism, lives a life of grace under the same Head. We, therefore, bear a spiritual relationship to every other member of Christ's Body, whether he be of the Militant Church on earth, the Suffering Church in purgatory, or the Triumphant Church in heaven. The members of the Mystical Body are also united in the sufferings and joys of every other member, for as St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member."<sup>7</sup> St. Augustine, when contemplating the mystery of Christ's intimate union with every member of the Church, is said to have exclaimed: "Let us congratulate ourselves, let us break forth into thanksgiving, we are become not only Christians but Christ."

**LIVING THE CHRIST-LIFE:** A Christian, then, is not only a follower of Christ, but one who actually lives the Christ-life in common with all the faithful as a body. It is this beautiful and consoling doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ which underlies the entire system of liturgical or corporate worship, and makes us a multitude of believers and worshipers with but one heart and one soul. Our study at this point might well be a discussion of some of the means by which the mystic personality of Christ may be brought into closer relationship with daily life.

**MOTU PROPRIO OF PIUS X:** On November 22, 1903, Pope Pius X issued his famous *Motu Proprio* on Sacred Music in which he declared that the active participation of the faithful in the most holy Mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church is **the primary and indispensable fount of the true Christian spirit**. These words are the keynote of the present liturgical revival which urges upon the laity an active and intelligent participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This participation can be achieved only when Catholics

5. John XV, 6.

6. *The Means of Grace*, McNeill-Aaron, pp. 22-23.

7. I Cor. XII, 26, 27.

look upon the Mass, the public and solemn prayer of the Church, as a sacrifice which the Mystical Body—the faithful in the pews and the celebrant at the altar—offer together with Christ their High Priest. It can be enjoyed in its fulness only when they attain to a proper understanding of its setting in the liturgical year.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**PRIVATE DEVOTIONS DURING MASS:** Unfortunately there are many sincere and devout persons who spend their entire time during Mass in their private devotions. They recite the rosary, or, if they intend to receive Holy Communion, they read the usual “prayers before and after Communion,” not realizing that the prayers of the Mass itself form the proper and most pleasing preparation for the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Such persons fulfill their obligation of assisting at Mass, but they do not participate actively in the liturgy as do those who follow the holy Sacrifice by reading the prayers of the Mass along with the celebrant at the altar.

**THE MISSAL, THE IDEAL MASS BOOK:** The Missal is the ideal Mass book, since it contains the exact words which the celebrant reads at the altar, and, therefore, reflects the changing moods of the liturgy throughout the cycles of the ecclesiastical year.

“To a Catholic there is nothing he can be more justly proud of than his Missal. Every year it reproduces the life of our Lord by means of Gospels and feasts. Every year it gives us the teachings of the apostles in the Epistles. Every year it presents for our imitation the example of the Church’s heroes who have lived Christ-lives in a perfect manner. It is the great treasury book of the Church stored with prayers for every season. It is filled with substantial devotion; pregnant with sane, pure, and unalloyed doctrine. A stranger to all devotional fads and fashions, it is one of the chief means to promote solid and permanent devotion to the central act of every day’s world happenings—the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.”<sup>8</sup>

**THE MASS, A SUBLIME ACT OF WORSHIP:** The Mass is, indeed, “the central act of every day’s world happenings.” It is the greatest and most sublime act of homage that can be offered to the Creator. St. Alphonsus Liguori says that all the honor which has been rendered to God by the homage of the angels, and by the virtues of men, by their austerities, their martyrdoms, and their other holy works, could never have given God as much glory as a single Mass.

**DAILY MASS:** Yet, except on Sundays and holydays of obligation, comparatively few of us avail ourselves of this fountain of grace. This is evidenced by the scant attendance at the week-day Masses. But if we are to bring the divine personality of Christ into our daily lives, we should, if possible, begin the day by participating in the holy Sacrifice. With the aid and under the direction of the Missal, we ought “to follow with the eyes, the mind, and the heart, what is passing at the altar, and to associate ourselves with the prayers the Church places at this sacred moment on the lips of her ministers.”<sup>9</sup> Thus in union with the Mystical Body, and with Christ its Head, our imperfect sacrifice becomes perfect and acceptable to God.

8. A Plan for Daily Mass, Morrison, *Orate Fratres*, July 27, 1935, p. 419.

9. *Christ the Life of the Soul*, Marmion, p. 257.

**THE MASS, A SACRIFICE AND A BANQUET:** But the Mass is not only a sacrifice, it is also a banquet. If we are to participate corporately or as members of a body in the fruits and blessings of the Sacrifice, if we are to "abide" in Christ and share His divine life more abundantly, we must receive Him in Holy Communion. The Holy Eucharist not only unites the Mystical Body with Christ, but it also unites the members of that Body to one another. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."<sup>10</sup> Or in other words: because the bread is one, all we, being many, are one body, who partake of the one bread.

**CHRIST IN OUR NEIGHBOR:** This spiritual relationship of the members of the Mystical Body to one another imposes a life of divine charity upon those who form the brotherhood. If we read the description of the last judgment as related in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew,<sup>11</sup> we are not left in doubt as to how or to whom this charity shall be dispensed, nor does Christ withhold from us the nature of the reward which He has prepared "from the foundation of the world" for those who show mercy in His name. To the question: "Lord when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and came to Thee?"<sup>12</sup> Christ will reply: ". . . as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."<sup>13</sup> It would, indeed, be difficult to refuse mercy if we but saw Christ in our neighbor. The words which He will say on the day of judgment are another proof of His mystic union with the members of the human race.

**CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY:** The enumeration of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy was a memory feat which, as children, we mastered in our catechism lesson. If our memories are good we can repeat them even now, but how many of us have consistently followed the precept to perform these works according to the temporal and spiritual needs of our neighbor? How many of us have made a practical demonstration of their efficacy in our daily lives?

The corporal works of mercy are based, principally, on the enumeration which Christ gives in His description of the "last day." They are: To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy, which alleviate our neighbor's spiritual misfortunes, also have their source in the Scriptures and are considered equally binding as those which minister to his temporal necessities. They are: To admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

**EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS:** The lives of the saints give us examples of the spirit in which works of mercy should be performed. St. Thomas Aquinas puts almsgiving before prayer and fasting as a satisfaction for sin, as also does St. Magdalene of Pazzi. "When I engage in mental prayer," she says, "God assists me, but when I do good to my neighbor, I assist God, for He regards what I do to my neighbor, as done for Him." We need only to turn to the Beatitudes to read again of the eternal recompense which Christ has promised to the merciful; "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."<sup>14</sup>

10. I Cor. X, 17. 11. Matt. XXV, 31-46. 12. Matt. XXV, 37-39. 13. Matt. XXV, 40. 14. Matt. V, 7.

It would seem, then, that we can exemplify our membership in the Mystical Body, and extend the Christ-life in no better way, than by frequent attendance at Mass, by frequent reception of the sacraments, and by frequently breaking bread for Christ and giving Him to drink. We should not, however, neglect to harmonize our prayers and good works with the seasons and feasts of the church year so that we may merit the special graces and fruits of the mysteries by which Christ has redeemed us.

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. How does the Liturgical Catechism define the church year? Despite the fact that the liturgical year is the "annual celebration of Christ's mysteries," how do some of us regard it?
2. What do we mean when we say that Christ lives again in the liturgical year? How do the events in His life become "contemporary and immediately present" at certain seasons and feasts?
3. Explain the three phases in the complete life of Christ. When did His mystical life begin?
4. Show how Christ referred to His mystical life in the words He addressed to His apostles after the Last Supper.
5. From your own knowledge of the growth of a vine, explain how we—the branches—cannot possess eternal life unless we are joined to Christ—the vine.
6. St. Paul describes the Church as a Body of which Christ is the Head and we are the members. Discuss the explanation given in the text.
7. Explain the spiritual relationship which exists among the members of the three divisions of the Communion of Saints. How did St. Augustine describe this union?
8. Summing up all that has been said about the Mystical Body so far in the lesson, explain why this doctrine underlies the entire system of liturgical or corporate worship.
9. What words of Pope Pius X are considered to be the keynote of the present liturgical revival? What is meant by an active and intelligent participation in the Mass?

### PART II

10. What may be said about those persons who content themselves with their "private devotions" during Mass?
11. Why is the Missal said to be the ideal Mass book? Read the paragraph in the lesson which refers to the Missal.
12. How did St. Alphonsus Liguori value the Mass?
13. If we desire to bring Christ's divine personality into our lives how should we try to begin each day? How should we assist at Mass?
14. How may we share our Lord's life even more abundantly? Explain how the Holy Eucharist unites the members of the Mystical Body to one another.
15. This spiritual relationship imposes a life of divine charity on the members of Christ's Body. How does our Lord's description of the last judgment indicate this responsibility?
16. Enumerate the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. How does their performance bring the divine Personality into our daily lives?
17. How did St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Magdalene of Pazzi consider the works of mercy? What reward did Christ promise to the merciful?
18. How can we exemplify our membership in the Mystical Body of Christ?

## III

## Advent and Christmas

## PART I

The first Sunday of Advent is the New Year's day of the church calendar and the beginning of the preparatory season of the Christmas cycle. The word advent means "the coming." The length of the season is not measured by weeks or days, but by four Sundays, the first of which is a movable feast. It is always the Sunday nearest to the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle (November 30), and may occur as early as November 27 and as late as December 3.

**INCORRECT INTERPRETATION:** A popular notion—gradually being dispelled—is that the four Sundays of Advent represent 4000 years during which the world waited for the Redeemer. Since neither the Scriptures nor the liturgy indicate precisely the length of time that elapsed from Adam's fall to the birth of Christ, this interpretation is incorrect.

**LONGING FOR CHRIST:** Advent prepares us for the feast of Christmas by reminding us of the longing for the Messiah of God's chosen people who, for so many thousands of years, were sustained only by God's promise and by the words and admonitions of the prophets. The liturgy takes us back to the ages before the incarnation, and invites us to join with the patriarchs and prophets and with all the just men of those times in an urgent appeal to the Messiah: "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power, and come."<sup>1</sup> Advent is a season of spiritual cleansing—a time during which we should withdraw from the worldly pleasures and prepare ourselves through prayer, acts of mortification, and works of mercy for our rebirth with Christ.

**THREE-FOLD COMING:** A study of the Gospels, the Epistles, and the variable prayers of the Masses for the Sundays and Ember days will reveal that the liturgy of Advent contemplates a preparation for a three-fold coming or manifestation of Christ: (1) His coming into the world by His birth, (2) His coming into the hearts of men, and (3) His coming on the day of the Last Judgment.

**SERIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ADVENT LITURGY:** In the early days of the Church, Advent began with a fast. The Greek Church today keeps a six weeks' fast in preparation for Christmas. In the Roman rite the season is still penitential but not in the same degree as Lent since certain expressions of joyfulness are retained.

The serious aspect of the season of Advent is suggested by the use of violet vestments, the omission of the Gloria in the Mass, the themes of the Sunday Gospels—a description of the Last Judgment read on the first Sunday, and the penitential sermons of St. John the Baptist read on the three succeeding Sundays; the forbidding of the solemnizing of marriage; and the prescribing of special fast days—the Ember days and the vigil of Christmas.

**EXPRESSIONS OF JOYFULNESS:** On the other hand, notes of joy are indicated by the frequent recurrence of the "Alleluia" throughout the season.

1. Collect of Mass for the First Sunday of Advent. The Mass prayers quoted throughout this book are taken from the translation used in the St. Andrew Daily Missal (new and revised edition, 1936), by the kind permission of the distributors, The E. M. Lohmann Co., St. Paul, Minn.

On the third Sunday (Gaudete) the altars are adorned with flowers, and rose-colored vestments may be worn in place of the penitential purple. The name "Gaudete" comes from the opening words of the Introit: "Gaudete in Domino"—"Rejoice in the Lord always; Again I say, rejoice . . . for the Lord is nigh."

Finally, on each of the seven days before the vigil of Christmas, from December 17 to 23, one of the seven Greater Antiphons or the so-called "O Antiphons," is sung or recited in the divine office. They are called the "O Antiphons" because each begins with the letter "O." These antiphons are petitions addressed to our Lord under Scriptural titles which are applied to Him. They begin as follows: "O Wisdom!" "O Adonai!" "O Root of Jesse!" "O Key of David!" "O Dawn of the East!" "O King of the Gentiles!" and the last, "O Emmanuel!" One cannot read even the initial words of these antiphons without feeling the eagerness with which the liturgy anticipates the coming of the Son of God.

**THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:** The celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, although it does not bear any relation to the liturgy of Advent, fittingly suggests this preparatory season. This beautiful festival in honor of the Mother of God most appropriately foreshadows the coming of the Savior, or, as Father Martindale says of the Blessed Virgin: "Even when her arms do not yet hold her Son, she is exalted only because they shall."<sup>2</sup>

**EMBER DAYS PREPARE FOR THE NATIVITY:** The Masses for the Ember days, which occur between the third and fourth Sundays of Advent, also look forward to the Nativity. This is especially true of the Mass for Ember Friday. "The Mass of today sums up perfectly the whole spirit of Advent," says Dom Lefebvre, "which is, so to speak, the first act of the great drama of the Incarnation." It might be called "The Expectation of Christ!"<sup>3</sup>

The Introit announces: "Thou art near, O Lord." The lesson for the Epistle is taken from Isaias, who, nearly seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, wrote: "There shall come forth a rod (scion or descendant) out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root." The Gospel according to St. Luke tells of the fulfillment of Isaias' words when Mary conceived her child and went into the hill country to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who, filled with the Holy Ghost and recognizing the divine maternity of Mary, exclaimed: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

**PROFESSION OF FAITH:** If we have moved forward with the liturgy during the days of Advent by carefully following the Masses in our Missals; if we have truly longed for the coming of Jesus as did the loyal Jews of old, if we have confessed our sins with a contrite heart, our profession of faith will be pleasing to God, and the first step in our desire to live with Christ in the liturgical year will have been accomplished. On the vigil of our Lord's birthday we can repeat in the words of the Introit: "This day you shall know that the Lord will come, and save us; and in the morning you shall see His glory."

**ORIGIN OF THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS:** The Christmas season, properly speaking, begins on the vigil of Christmas and continues until the octave of Epiphany, January 13. The feast of the Nativity was not introduced into the liturgy until the fourth century. The actual date of Christ's birth is not

2. The Mind of the Missal, Martindale, p. 224.

3. St. Andrew Daily Missal, Lefebvre, p. 103.

known, because the early Christians celebrated only His death and resurrection. We can, therefore, merely speculate as to the reason why December 25 was chosen to honor the birth of our Lord. The Romans held a festival on that day in honor of the "unconquerable sun-god," so it is quite probable that the Christians sought to discourage this pagan practice by re-dedicating the day to the "Sun of Justice"—"the Light of the World."

**A FEAST OF LIGHT:** The liturgy for Christmas day testifies to the character of Christ as the "Light" or the "New Sun" that came into the world to dispel the darkness of ignorance and sin. The Collect for the midnight Mass reads: "O God, Who hast made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true light, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on earth may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven." The Gospel tells of "the brightness of God" that shone about the shepherds when the angel brought them the tidings of the birth of Christ. The Christmas Preface gives thanks because "by the mystery of the Word made flesh" the light of God's glory "hath shone anew upon the eyes of our mind."

The Introit for the dawn Mass opens with the words: "A light shall shine upon us this day: for the Lord is born to us," while the Gospel for the day Mass proclaims: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men: and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it . . . That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."

Possibly no aspect of the liturgy for Christmas emphasizes the darkness and the sad spiritual state of the world before the coming of Christ more than this glorious symbol of light under which the Church honors the nativity of our Lord. Let it not be said of us that we "did not comprehend it."

**THE VIGIL OF CHRISTMAS:** Formerly the faithful prepared for the feast of Christmas by an all-night watch or vigil. Today the festival is still preceded by a vigil which in this case is a day of fast and abstinence. The event which is related in the Gospel and read in the Mass for the day is closely associated with the nativity, since it concerns St. Joseph's anxiety and perplexity in regard to his holy spouse. We do not know how long God tried the soul of the foster-father of His divine Son, but the Evangelist St. Matthew tells us that He sent an angel who appeared to St. Joseph in his sleep and explained the mystery of the incarnation. Even St. Joseph suffered for a time under a cloud of darkness in regard to the divine plan of the redemption and the part which he was to have in its accomplishment.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**THE THREE MASSES:** The Church expresses her joy in our Saviour's birth by permitting each priest to celebrate three Masses on Christmas day, a practice which began during the reign of Pope St. Gregory the Great (d. 604).

The first Mass (midnight) was originally the Mass of the vigil. It was celebrated at St. Mary Major in Rome at the altar of the crib, so called because the sycamore-wood relics of the manger lie beneath the high altar of the church. They were placed there in the middle of the seventh century by Pope Theodore. The first Mass is called the "Mass of the Angels" because of the angel's "good tidings of great joy" which are announced in the Gospel.



The second Mass (dawn) originally honored St. Anastasia, virgin and martyr. It was celebrated on December 25 in the old church of St. Anastasia situated in the center of patrician Rome. This church was built in the fourth century and stands today quite isolated among the ruins of the city's pagan past. The second Mass for Christmas day still retains a remnant of the honor which was formerly accorded to St. Anastasia in the following Commemoration: "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who celebrate the festival of blessed Anastasia Thy Martyr, may feel the effects of her patronage with Thee." The Gospel of this Mass completes the story of the shepherds, and for this reason it is called the "Mass of the Shepherds."

The third Mass (day) is the solemn Mass of the feast. Again the station church is the Basilica of St. Mary Major. A passage from the Gradual: "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God," and the invitation to the nations to "adore the Lord" in the Alleluia verse account for the name, the "Mass of the People."

**SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE MASSES:** During the Middle Ages before the art of printing was developed and books were made available to everyone, the people were frequently taught the truths of their religion by the use of symbolism. Symbolism is the giving to outward things, such as words and actions, a more or less hidden meaning. According to medieval liturgists the three Masses of Christmas day were interpreted to symbolize or commemorate the three-fold birth of Christ: (a) His eternal birth in the bosom of His heavenly Father; (b) His human birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (c) His spiritual birth in the Mystical Body. Passages in the Gospels and prayers of all three of the Masses would seem to bear out this interpretation.

**CHRIST'S SPIRITUAL BIRTH:** Our Lord's spiritual birth in His Mystical Body is manifested not only in the Christmas liturgy but also by the faith of the members of that Body; by their acts of charity, by their worthy reception of the sacraments, and by their ardent desire to be reborn with Christ to a new life of grace. They celebrate the birth of our Lord in order to make possible their own spiritual rebirth.

An innovation occurs in the ceremonies of the high Mass on Christmas day when the celebrant, as well as the congregation, kneel while the choir sings the "Et incarnatus" of the Credo. This is a special act of veneration in honor of the mystery of the incarnation.

**SAINTS' DAYS:** The octave (eight day celebration) of Christmas contains three feasts of the sanctoral cycle which date from the fourth and fifth centuries. These feasts honor saints who were among the first to suffer martyrdom in testimony of Christ's divinity. They are: St. Stephen, December 26; St. John the Evangelist, December 27; and the Holy Innocents, December 28.

**SAINT STEPHEN:** The Acts of the Apostles<sup>4</sup> records all that is known of the life of St. Stephen the protomartyr. He was one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles to provide food for the poor. He worked such wonders among the people and defended Christ so fearlessly that the Jews, becoming envious and angry, accused him of blasphemy and stoned him to death. Like our Lord, he died with a prayer of forgiveness for his executioners on his lips. St. Stephen was a martyr both in will and in deed.

**SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST:** It was to St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," that our Lord intrusted His Blessed Mother, as he alone of all the apostles stood at the foot of the cross. He was just as willing then to die for

4. Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 6 and 7.

Christ as he was years later when he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, but was saved by a miracle. Although he died a natural death, the Church has awarded him the crown of martyrdom. He was truly a martyr by will and testimony.

**THE HOLY INNOCENTS:** A note of sadness is expressed in the liturgy for the feast of the Holy Innocents, when the Gloria and the Alleluia are suppressed and the Mass is celebrated in purple vestments. But it is not for the infants that the Church mourns—they were privileged to receive the death-blow which was intended for the Christchild—but for the mothers of Bethlehem who mourned for their children “and would not be comforted.” The Holy Innocents were martyrs in deed but not in will, since they were not capable of giving their consent to die for Christ.

**CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS:** No feast of the liturgical year is associated with so many beautiful traditions as Christmas. Every Christian country has its peculiar national customs together with its legends that center about the nativity. Many of the great artists have made the birth of our Lord the theme of their masterpieces, but St. Francis of Assisi first conceived the idea of giving a tableau representation of the birth of Christ. On a visit to Rome in 1223 he presented to Pope Honorius III plans for reproducing the scene of the nativity on Christmas eve in order to encourage devotion to the Infant Jesus. The Holy Father gladly gave his consent. The actual details of the project are related in one of the many lovely legends that are told of St. Francis.

**GIOTTO'S FRESCOES IN THE UPPER CHURCH AT ASSISI:** No doubt the oldest and possibly one of the most authentic pictures of St. Francis' crib is depicted among the frescoes in the Upper Church of St. Francis in Assisi. Giotto, who, according to Gilbert K. Chesterton, “could express in images what Francis himself always felt in imagery,” translated the scene with humility and sincerity. The following legendary account of the “Crib at Greccio” is taken from a recent work on the frescoes: “Now three years before his death it befell that he (St. Francis) was minded, at the town of Greccio, to celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus, with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion. That this might not seem an innovation, he sought and obtained license from the Supreme Pontiff, and then made ready a manger, and bade hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought unto the spot. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that august night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with tender love, stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy. Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round of the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him. A certain knight, valorous and true, Messer John of Greccio, who for love of Christ had left the secular army, and was bound by closest friendship unto the man of God, declared that he beheld a little Child right fair to see sleeping in that manger, Who seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced Him in both arms.”<sup>5</sup>

**DEVOTION TO THE CRIB:** Giotto depicted this legend on a wall of the Basilica of St. Francis more than six hundred years ago, one hundred years after

5. Giotto, *The Legend of St. Francis*, G. K. Chesterton and E. M. Cowles, p. 19.

the saint's death. Devotion to the Crib has spread throughout the Christian world. Every year from Christmas eve until the day of the octave of Epiphany, a crib representing the birthplace of Christ, is erected in many of our churches in order to recall to the minds of the faithful the mystery of the incarnation and to extend the influence of the sacred liturgy into their daily lives.

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. Give a short summary of facts regarding the season of Advent. What popular notion about the symbolism of the four Sundays of Advent is gradually being dispelled?
2. How does Advent prepare us for the feast of Christmas? What is its spiritual significance?
3. Select texts from the Gospels of the four Sundays of Advent that show how the liturgy contemplates a three-fold coming of Christ.
4. Advent is a penitential season. In what ways does the liturgy remind us of this fact?
5. How does the Church express her joy in the coming of the Messiah?
6. Discuss the "O Antiphons" and if possible read them in full.
7. Why is the feast of the Immaculate Conception so appropriate for the season of Advent?
8. Read some of the prayers from the Masses of the winter Ember days, particularly those for Ember Friday, and observe how they foreshadow the nativity of our Lord.
9. How may we live according to the spirit of the liturgy during the days of Advent?
10. Give a probable reason why in the fourth century December 25 was chosen to honor our Lord's birthday?
11. Show how the various prayers in the Christmas Masses allude to Christ as the "Light" or the "new Sun"? How may we apply this symbolism to the state of our souls?
12. How did the faithful formerly prepare for the feast of Christmas? How is the "vigil" observed today? Read the Gospel for the Vigil Mass.

### PART II

13. How does the Church express her joy at the birth of Christ?
14. Trace the historical development of the three Christmas Masses.
15. According to medieval liturgists what is the symbolism of the Christmas Masses? Define symbolism. Select passages from the Gospels and prayers of the three Christmas Masses showing how the three-fold birth of Christ is indicated.
16. How is Christ's spiritual birth manifested in the hearts of Christians?
17. What saints are honored in the liturgy on the three days following Christmas?
18. Read chapters 6 and 7 of the Acts of the Apostles for information regarding the life of St. Stephen, the protomartyr.
19. Why does the Church honor St. John the Apostle and Evangelist as a martyr?
20. How does the liturgy comfort the mothers of the Holy Innocents?
21. Who originated the popular devotion of the crib? Read the paragraph describing St. Francis' representation of the holy manger. Describe some popular Christmas customs.
22. How does the Church encourage devotion to the Christmas crib?

## IV

## Christmastide and Time after Epiphany

## PART I

January 1, the New Year's day of the civil year, is the last day of the Nativity octave, and the feast of the Circumcision. It is a holyday of obligation. Since Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, He was not bound by the Mosaic law of circumcision, but because He was "born under the law" and came that the law might be fulfilled, He allowed Himself to be circumcised when He was eight days old.

The Church is not so much concerned with this oriental rite of purification, but rather with the fact that by this ceremony Christ received the name which had been revealed to His Blessed Mother and to St. Joseph by an angel from heaven; and for the further reason that at His circumcision our Lord shed His precious blood for the first time for man's redemption.

**FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS:** It was customary among the Jews for the father to choose the name which was given to his son when he was circumcised. "The Heavenly Father," says Doctor Bendas, "exercised His parental prerogative in regard to our Lord by proclaiming that His Son, born of Mary, should be called Jesus, Savior."<sup>1</sup> St. Joseph, the foster-father of the Child, gave Him the holy name of Jesus as he had been commanded to do by the angel.

The first Sunday of the year, if it occurs between the Circumcision and Epiphany, is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus; otherwise, the feast is transferred to January 2. It is most fitting that the members of the Mystical Body should place the good works of the year under the patronage of the holy name in anticipation of that day when they shall have the happiness of seeing their own names "written in heaven under the glorious name of Jesus, as a pledge of eternal predestination."<sup>2</sup>

**EPIPHANY:** The feast of Epiphany, the octave of which completes the Christmas festivities, is one of the oldest of the ecclesiastical year and in a liturgical sense ranks higher than Christmas. It is classified with Easter and Pentecost as a cardinal feast because it is followed by a series of Sundays which are designated as coming after the feast.

The word Epiphany is derived from a Greek word meaning "manifestation." The festival is often referred to as the "Feast of the Three Kings," but it has a much wider signification, since the Church celebrates three different occasions on which our Lord revealed or manifested Himself as the Messiah. (1) God revealed Himself to the pagan or Gentile world by the star and in the calling of the Magi indicated our own calling to the true faith; (2) at the baptism of Christ, God revealed His divine Son to the Jews; and (3) at the wedding feast of Cana, Christ revealed Himself for the first time as the Son of God by changing water into wine.

**SYMBOLISM OF GIFTS:** The Fathers of the Church have called attention to the symbolism of the gifts of the Magi. "In examining the nature of these gifts which they had prepared before their departure, we see that divine illumi-

1. Biblical Questions, Vol. II, New Testament, Bendas, p. 86.

2. Postcommunion, Mass of the feast of the Holy Name.

nation had already manifested to the Magi something of the eminent dignity of Him whom they desired to contemplate and adore. The nature of these gifts likewise indicates the nature of the duties that the Magi would fulfil towards the King of the Jews." <sup>3</sup>

Gold, a symbol of royalty, honored Christ as a King; frankincense, whose vapors rise like a prayer to heaven, proclaimed His divinity; while myrrh, which was used to heal wounds and to embalm the dead, referred to the suffering and death which Christ would endure for the redemption of mankind. The Church wishes the faithful to imitate the Magi by bringing to the Infant Jesus the gold of love, the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of mortification and self-denial.

**EPIPHANY CUSTOMS:** Interesting old-world Epiphany customs which prevail in some localities, dramatize the various phases of the feast and bring its celebration into the lives of the people. On the vigil of Epiphany, water, incense, and chalk are sometimes blessed. The blessing of the water recalls the ancient belief that Christ hallowed all the waters of the earth when He was baptized in the Jordan. The blessed incense is used to purify dwellings and barns, and the names of the three kings are written over the doors with blessed chalk with the intention of driving away evil spirits. In homes where the crib or "creche" is displayed, the figures of the Magi bearing their gifts should be put in place on the feast of the Epiphany.

Religious customs of this nature, when observed year after year, become traditional in families and are the source of much happiness and spiritual edification. They not only preserve Catholic culture but they have a definite teaching value, two advantages that should not be disregarded.

**THREE ACTS IN A DRAMA:** The Christmas cycle is divided into three distinct periods during which the mystery of the incarnation is presented in what one liturgical writer calls "three acts of a magnificent drama." The first act is Advent during which, as we have learned, the liturgy urges us to join our hopes with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to place our faith in the promises of such prophets as Moses, David, Jeremias, Isaias, and St. John the Baptist.

In the second act, Christmastide, we are first taken to the crib of Bethlehem, where we hear the "heavenly army, praising God" and adore the holy Infant with the shepherds; next we witness the circumcision, and finally with the Magi, St. John the Baptist, and the wedding guests of Cana, we testify to the three-fold manifestation of the divinity of the Messias.

"The third act, which is unfolded during the time after Epiphany, is an extension of Christmastide, in which our Lord's divinity continues to be affirmed. No longer, however, is there question of the angels of the Gloria in excelsis, nor the star, nor even the voice of the Father and the vision of the Holy Ghost as at our Lord's baptism: but now it is Christ Himself who acts and speaks as God." <sup>4</sup>

**ACTS AND WORDS OF CHRIST:** The Gospels read on the Sundays normally assigned to the time after Epiphany, therefore, present certain miracles and parables—Christ's acts and words which give testimony of Him. These Sundays are not, strictly speaking, a continuation of the liturgical character of the Nativity cycle, but they do carry the Epiphany or manifestation theme.

**TRANSFERENCE OF CELEBRATION:** Whenever Easter comes early, Septuagesima Sunday encroaches upon the time after Epiphany, and it is, there-

3. Christ in His Mysteries, Marmion, p. 147.

4. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. 209.

fore, necessary to transfer one or more of the Sundays designated as the **third to the sixth after Epiphany** to the time after Pentecost. These transferred Sundays are then celebrated between the twenty-third and the last Sunday after Pentecost. This change is never a source of confusion since every prayer book contains a table of movable feasts. The date of Septuagesima Sunday, which occurs nine weeks before Easter, determines the length of the after-Epiphany season. This group of Sundays after Epiphany recalls the transitional period between the childhood of Christ and His public life. It is said to commemorate the years of the "hidden life," during which Jesus lived with His parents in Nazareth.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY:** At this time, when the "hidden life" of our Lord is being celebrated, the liturgy most appropriately directs our attention to the Holy Family. The feast is assigned to the Sunday within the octave of Epiphany, unless it is the octave day, in which case the celebration is advanced to the preceding day, or the Saturday within the octave.

**GOSPEL FOR THE DAY:** The Gospel read in the Mass is St. Luke's account of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. Incidentally, this Gospel narrative gives us the only knowledge which we have concerning Christ's life from His twelfth year until His baptism in the River Jordan. The Evangelist tells us that Jesus went down to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph "and was subject to them," and that "He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man."

**FAMILY PRAYER:** In giving us the holy family for a model the Church expects us to imitate the domestic virtues practiced in that lowly home in Nazareth—humility, patience, obedience, charity, and the love of prayer. The Collect, the Secret, and the Postcommunion read in the Mass ask for special blessings; the Collect being particularly appropriate for a family prayer. It reads as follows: "O Lord Jesus Christ, who when Thou wast subject to Mary and Joseph didst sanctify the home life with ineffable virtues: grant that, by their assistance, we may be instructed by the example of Thy Holy Family and become partakers of their eternal happiness."

**THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION:** The law of Moses prescribed that forty days after the birth of a son, Jewish women should go to the Temple for the ceremony of purification and the offering of the usual sacrifice—a lamb, or, if their means would not permit a lamb, "two doves or two young pigeons." The law further ordained that the firstborn children of Jewish parents should be offered to God and then redeemed with five shekels of silver.

The feast of the Purification celebrates three events which took place in the Temple at the time the Blessed Virgin complied with these requirements of the Hebrew law:

1. The purification of our Blessed Lady who, although she conceived and gave birth to her Son in a miraculous manner, humbly and obediently went to the Temple to fulfill the first obligation.

2. The presentation of Jesus, her "firstborn," in the Temple and His ransom, to comply with the second obligation.

3. The meeting of the boy Jesus and his parents with holy Simeon and the prophetess Anna.

**THE CEREMONY OF CHURCHING:** In many places a pious and edifying custom known as the churching of women prevails, which recalls the purification of the Virgin Mary in the Temple at Jerusalem. It consists of a special form of blessing which a mother who has recently given birth to a child receives at the entrance of the church. While holding a lighted candle in her hand the woman is sprinkled with holy water. After reciting a psalm the priest offers her the end of the stole which he is wearing and leads her into the church. She then advances to the altar where he says a prayer of thanksgiving and invokes God to grant by the merits and intercession of Mary that the mother and her offspring may arrive "at the joys of everlasting happiness."

**THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE:** Notwithstanding the name by which the feast of the Purification is known, the liturgy gives the greater prominence to the presentation of our Lord in the Temple, regarding the feast as honoring the Infant Jesus, rather than His Blessed Mother. The day is also called Candlemas or the "Mass of the Candles." The procession with burning candles which takes place before the high Mass, is a reminder of the journey which Mary and Joseph and the holy Infant made to the Temple.

**SYMBOLISM OF THE PROCESSION:** "The Church in her liturgy of this day joyfully joins Simeon in acclaiming Christ as the 'light unto the revelation of the Gentiles.' Solemnly she blesses candles and prays that to the exterior light of these candles may correspond the interior light in our souls . . . In solemn procession the faithful (should) carry their lighted tapers, to signify that they intend to bear within themselves the Christ-life throughout the journey of their earthly existence. They proclaim to the world that Christ is their light and life, that they are and will remain true Christophoroi—Christbearers. This ancient procession is a beautiful cultural fulfillment of the command of Christ: 'So let your light shine before men.'"<sup>5</sup> Formerly the faithful took part in the procession; today they are usually represented by the acolytes who accompany the priest and his ministers.

**BLESSING THE CANDLES:** The prayers which are said for the solemn blessing of the candles date from the tenth century. They set forth the beautiful symbolism of fire and light in the liturgy and the significance which the Church attaches to candles that are blessed and sanctified "for the use of men, and the health of bodies and souls, whether upon the earth or in the waters."<sup>6</sup>

Lighted candles are held in the hands of the ministers and of the faithful during the procession, while the Gospel is being sung, and from the Sanctus to the Communion.

**BLESSED CANDLES IN HOMES:** It is customary on the feast of the Presentation for the faithful to make gifts of blessed candles to the Church for use in divine services. They also take them to their homes to burn during storms and when the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the sick, and to place in the hands of the dying during their last agony. Blessed candles are not only sacramentals, but as symbols of "eternal light" they represent the joyful theme of the Christmas cycle.

**THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT:** If we turn to the Epistle which is read on the first Sunday of Advent we find that the liturgy introduces the light-motive in the words of St. Paul: "The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light."

5. Light and Life, Orate Fratres, Jan. 25, 1936, Diekmann, p. 100.

6. First Collect, Blessing of the Candles.

And so throughout the Christmas cycle the Church continues to hold before our eyes the "Light of the World," and on the "Feast of the Candles" she puts into our hand a burning taper, representing Christ Himself, and bids us carry it as Mary bore her divine Child to the Temple.

**THE GRACE OF THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE:** The historical facts of the mystery of the nativity which the liturgy renews for us in the first cycle of the ecclesiastical year, indicate the particular grace which Christ wills to distribute to our souls. By His birth, He took unto Himself our humanity, and in exchange He gives to us a share in His divinity. The more closely, therefore, that we unite ourselves to Him in this mystery, the more abundantly we share in His divine life and the better prepared we are to advance with Him "in wisdom and age, and grace."

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. What is the liturgical character of the first day of the civil year? In what particular aspect of the feast of the Circumcision is the Church mostly concerned?
2. How did the heavenly Father exercise His right to name His Son? On what day is the feast of the Holy Name celebrated? How should the faithful commemorate this feast?
3. What is the liturgical classification of Epiphany? Define the word and mention the three mysteries in our Lord's life which the feast celebrates.
4. Read the Gospel narratives of the visit of the Magi (Cf. Matthew 2, 1-12); the baptism of Christ (Cf. Matthew 3, 13-17); and the wedding feast of Cana (Cf. John 2, 1-11). Show how and by whom Christ's divinity was proclaimed on each occasion.
5. Why did certain Fathers of the Church see evidence of a "divine illumination" in the gifts which they presented to the Christchild? What do these gifts symbolize?
6. Discuss various customs that dramatize certain phases of the feast of Epiphany. Give reasons why these customs should be preserved.
7. How is the mystery of the incarnation celebrated in the first act of the drama of the Christmas cycle? What events are commemorated in the second? How is Christ's divinity affirmed in the third act, called the "Time after Epiphany"?
8. Read the Gospels for the six Sundays normally assigned to the time after Epiphany and name the miracles and parables, Christ's acts and words, which they record.
9. Explain by referring to the "Table of Movable Feasts" in a prayer book or Missal, how the date of Easter Sunday of the present year determines the length of the time after Epiphany. What period in our Lord's life does the time after Epiphany recall?

### PART II

10. Why is the feast of the Holy Family so appropriately celebrated during the octave of Epiphany? Read the Gospel of the Mass for the day. What does it tell us regarding Christ's "hidden life"?



11. What particular virtues did the Holy Family practice in their home in Nazareth? Read the Collect, the Secret, and the Postcommunion. What blessings are asked for in each prayer? Why is the Collect considered such a beautiful family prayer?
12. What was the law of Moses in regard to the purification of women after childbirth? What events does the feast of the Purification celebrate?
13. Explain the ceremony of churching.
14. Which one of the three events celebrated in the feast of the Purification does the liturgy particularly stress? Why is the feast popularly called Candlemas? Of what is the procession a reminder?
15. What is the symbolism of the liturgical procession held on the feast of the Purification? How are the faithful represented in the procession today?
16. Why does the Church bless candles? How are they used in the liturgy of the feast of the Purification? How should they be used in the home?
17. What is the symbolism of light as it is spoken of in the prayers of the liturgy for the Christmas cycle?
18. What grace did Christ merit for us in the mystery of the nativity?

## V

## The First Five Weeks of Lent

## PART I

As we proceed with our study of the church year, we are impressed by the divinely inspired structure of the liturgy—the union of word and deed by which Christ lives and acts in His Mystical Body.

**LITURGICAL DIVISIONS:** The Paschal cycle, like the Nativity cycle, is subdivided into periods of **preparation, celebration, and prolongation.**

The period of **preparation** consists of the following divisions: (1) The Septuagesimal season, or the pre-Lenten period, which consists of seventeen days, beginning with Septuagesima Sunday and continuing until Ash Wednesday; (2) the Lenten season, a unit of forty days exclusive of Sundays, which extends from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. (The two weeks immediately preceding Easter form a subdivision known as Passiontide, the last week of which is called Holy Week.)

The period of **celebration** is designated as Eastertide and begins with Easter Sunday and continues until Trinity Sunday.

The period of **prolongation** of the celebration is referred to in the liturgy as the time after Pentecost and embraces the weeks which elapse between Trinity Sunday and the first Sunday of Advent.

**THREE SUNDAYS:** The Septuagesimal or pre-Lenten time contains three Sundays, namely: Septuagesima (seventieth), Sexagesima (sixtieth), and Quinquagesima (fiftieth). These names do not refer to the days before Easter as they are calculated today, but they are merely vestiges of a numerical system in use in the early ages of the Church. It was the custom then, just as it is today, to prepare for the festival of Easter with a season of mortification. It began seventy, sixty, or fifty days before the feast, depending somewhat on the country, locality, or religious house where it was observed. Since the sixth century there has been a universal observance of the season both as to its commencement and its duration, but the names of the Sundays are still retained and should remind us of the penitential zeal of our forefathers in the faith.

**LITURGICAL CHARACTER:** The general liturgical character of the pre-Lenten period is essentially a **distant preparation for Easter.** "It serves," says Dom Lefebvre, "as a time of transition for the soul, which must pass from Christmas joys to the stern penance of the sacred forty days. Even if the fast is not of obligation, the colour of the vestments worn is already violet. As during Advent, the recital of the Gloria in excelsis is suspended, since this hymn which celebrated Christ's birth in our mortal flesh is reserved to extol Him . . . when He rises from the tomb."<sup>1</sup> The Alleulia, too, is put aside.

**SEASON OF PREPARATION:** The liturgy of the Septuagesimal season—the divine office and the Mass prayers—carries a number of themes which have a direct bearing on the mystery of the redemption. The Gospels read in the Masses for the three Sundays of this period remind us that the call to salvation is a special grace which we should accept with dispositions of gratitude and humility and with absolute faith in God. Since we cannot hope to gain heaven

1. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. 238.

without associating ourselves in a spirit of penance and self-denial with the redemptive work of the Messiah, the Church has instituted the season of Lent to prepare us to die to sin with Christ in order that we may rise with Him in a new life of grace.

**FORTY DAYS OF LENT:** Forty is a significant number in the holy Scriptures. The deluge lasted forty days; the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years; Moses, Elias, and our Lord fasted for forty days and forty nights. Before the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great (604), the Lenten period contained only thirty-six fast days. He added four days and made Ash Wednesday the beginning of Lent. The season takes its name from "lencten," an old English word meaning springtime.

**STATIONAL MASSES:** Each day of Lent, like Sundays, has its own Mass which is known as a Stational Mass.<sup>2</sup> In the early Christian centuries it was customary for the Holy Father or his representative to celebrate high Mass at least once a year in each of the great basilicas, in the twenty-five parish churches of Rome, and in many other sanctuaries. On each of the days appointed the clergy and the people went in procession to the designated church—called a stational church—where the Mass of the day was offered. Stational Masses are still celebrated in Rome, but with much less ceremony.

**LENTEN STATIONAL MASSES:** Each day of Lent still has its proper Station indicated in the Missal. It is interesting to note that sometimes texts in the Mass itself reflect the influence of the Station where it was originally offered. For instance, the Collect for the Thursday following the third Sunday of Lent invokes SS. Cosmas and Damian, the titular saints of the Station for that day. The relics of these two young brothers who suffered martyrdom in the third century, are still venerated in the church which bears their names. St. Sabina's on the Aventine is the Stational church for Ash Wednesday. Formerly the popes walked there barefoot to open the Lenten services by blessing the ashes and distributing them to the people.

**ASH WEDNESDAY:** The first day of the Lenten fast takes its name from the liturgical ceremony in which bishops and priests open the penitential season by marking the sign of the cross with blessed ashes on the foreheads of the faithful with the words: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return." The ashes are obtained by burning the palms which were blessed on the preceding Palm Sunday.

**BLESSING OF THE ASHES:** The solemn blessing of the ashes takes place before the Mass. In the prayers God is implored to spare the penitent, to be merciful to the suppliant, and to grant "that all who may be sprinkled with them (the ashes) for the remission of their sins may receive health of body and safety of soul."<sup>3</sup>

**PUBLIC PENITENTS:** In the early ages of Christianity only public sinners, those who had committed grave faults and who were obliged to perform their penances publicly, received the ashes on Ash Wednesday. On that day the bishop blessed the hair shirts which they were to wear and sprinkled them with ashes and, while the faithful chanted the Seven Penitential Psalms, the penitents were expelled from the church and forbidden to return until Holy Thursday, the day on which they would be permitted to receive sacramental absolution.

2. Praying the Mass, Butler-Clendenin, pp. 26 and 59.

3. Prayer for Blessing of the Ashes.

**UNIVERSAL CUSTOM:** Later on, the faithful associated themselves with the penitents and received the "sign of death" so that they might begin a new life with Christ on Easter day. Towards the close of the eleventh century the Council of Beneventum ordained that all the faithful without distinction should be urged to receive the ashes on Ash Wednesday.

**OUTWARD EXPRESSIONS AND INTERNAL SACRIFICES:** It is interesting to learn that the significant ceremony which the liturgy employs to symbolize the spirit of the Lenten season, has such a long and unbroken history, but outward expressions are futile unless they are accompanied by an emotion of internal sacrifice. They should, like the sacraments, be an "outward sign of an inward grace."

**ESSENTIALS OF GOOD WORKS:** During Lent the members of the Mystical Body should join themselves more closely with their divine Head and with one another, by withdrawing from worldly affairs and pleasures and by earnestly devoting more than the usual share of time to the performance of good works—fasting, prayer, and acts of charity.

Fasting, to be pleasing to God, should not consist in the mere abstinence from food, but it should be joined to abstinence from sin and mortification of the senses. Prayer should not be the thoughtless repetition of words, but a diligent meditation on things which pertain to God and the welfare of the soul. Charity should not only consist of alms but it should also characterize every act of life; the charity which St. Paul describes as being patient, kind, joyous, unselfish, humble, truthful, sincere, and enduring—in short, the perfection of charity.

The sacrifices which we make during Lent can be consecrated and made more pleasing to God, if we but unite them to the Sacrifice of His divine Son—the holy sacrifice of the Mass. If we cannot assist at Mass every day, we can at least offer our "prayers, works, and sufferings" to God "in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world" by means of the "Morning Offering."

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**GOSPELS OF THE LENTEN LITURGY:** The liturgy, by means of the Gospels read in the Mass for each day of Lent, holds before us the example of Christ by recounting events of the three years of His public ministry, beginning with His forty days in the desert. Since these Gospels were selected for the lessons which they teach and because of their special application in the development of the liturgy for Lent, they are not, of course, arranged in strict chronological or historical sequence.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LENTEN LITURGY:** A student of the Missal will observe, too, that the Epistles, which are usually lessons taken from the Old Testament, often contain passages which correspond in theme with parts of the Gospels for the different days. In this way the liturgy points out the striking parallels which exist between the teachings of the Evangelists and the prophecies of Isaias, Jeremias, David, Jonas, and Daniel regarding the life and death of Christ.

Another point of the liturgy which must be emphasized is that Lent was formerly the time during which the catechumens were instructed for the Sacrament of Baptism, which was solemnly administered on Holy Saturday. It was

also the season of probation and penance for the public sinners who would be reconciled by sacramental absolution on Holy Thursday. This two-fold preparation characterizes the entire period of Lent. "The spirit and even the ceremonies of these two sacraments of the dead are found in the liturgy of the Season of Lent; indeed they sum up this period of purgative discipline in which, with our Lord, we die to sin."<sup>4</sup>

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** We should bear in mind that we are the *catechumens* whom the Church has in mind today, in so far as we are preparing for the renewal of our baptismal vows at Easter; we are the *penitents* for whom the Church faithfully prays in the "Oratio super populum," the prayer over the people<sup>5</sup> which is said immediately after the Postcommunion in many of the Lenten Masses.

**LAETARE SUNDAY:** The first four Sundays in Lent are sometimes designated by Latin names taken from the first words of their respective Introits. The first Sunday is called "Invocabit"—"He shall cry to me"; the second, "Reminiscere"—"Remember"; the third, "Oculi"—"My eyes are ever towards the Lord"; and the fourth, the familiar "Laetare"—"Rejoice."

The Thursday before Laetare Sunday is referred to as Mid-Lent Thursday. It is, strictly speaking, the middle of Lent, and was at one time celebrated as such. The faithful Christians were urged to continue their fasts and mortifications and to look ahead to the joys of Easter. In time the Church transferred the observance to the Sunday following—Laetare Sunday. Just as the liturgy of Gaudete Sunday in Advent permits the use of flowers on the altar and the playing of the organ during Mass, and substitutes rose-colored vestments for the austere purple, it employs the same symbols of spiritual joy on Laetare Sunday to encourage the members of the Church to continue the warfare against sin and self-indulgence, and to enter with proper and holy dispositions into the "great fortnight" of Passiontide.

**PASSION SUNDAY:** On entering the church on Passion Sunday, the beginning of Passiontide, we observe a different scene and are made aware that a change has taken place. The statues of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, and even the crucifix above the altar are hidden from view by purple veils.

**VEILING THE CRUCIFIX:** Liturgists do not seem to agree regarding the purpose of the custom of covering the images and the crucifix—a practice which has continued since the thirteenth century. Some authorities find the reason in the Gospel, which relates that Christ "hid Himself" when the Jews took up stones to cast at Him because they were angered at His declaration ". . . before Abraham was made, I am." Others are of the opinion that it is a survival of the "hunger-veil" which in former times was hung in front of the altar during the entire season of Lent. The theory is also advanced that the Church wishes to show reverence for the mystery of Christ's death by hiding the crucifix, just as she veils the chalice, or conceals the ciborium and the tabernacle under silken draperies when the Blessed Sacrament is reposed within them.

Finally, as Father Tanqueray says: "the image of the Savior is veiled as a sign of mourning and sorrow, in order to remind us that moments will come when we must suffer without consolations."<sup>6</sup>

**LITURGICAL REGULATIONS:** Other liturgical regulations which are peculiar to the Passiontide are the omission of the Psalm "Judica me," "Judge me,

4. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. 263.

5. Praying the Mass, Butler-Clendenin, p. 62.

6. The Spiritual Life, Tanqueray, p. 744.

O God," from the Masses of the season, and of the "Gloria Patri" at the Introit and after the Lavabo. The Preface of the Holy Cross is prescribed for days that do not have a proper Preface.

**FEAST OF THE SEVEN SORROWS:** During the Christmas cycle the Church celebrates two great feasts of our Blessed Lady: the Immaculate Conception, December 8, and the Purification, February 2. On the Friday of Passion Week, the liturgy presents for our contemplation, the Seven Sorrows of the Mother of Jesus. As we meditate on (1) the prophecy of holy Simeon; (2) the flight into Egypt; (3) the loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple; (4) the meeting of Christ and His Mother on the way to Calvary; (5) Christ's death on the cross; (6) the taking down of our Lord's body from the cross; and (7) His burial in the tomb, we are reminded that as Dom Gueranger so aptly says: "An ineffable union is established between the oblation of the Incarnate Word and that of Mary; the divine blood and the tears of the Mother flow together and are mixed for the redemption of the human race."<sup>7</sup>

In the "Stabat Mater," the Sequence which is read or sung in the Mass of the feast, these words are addressed to the Sorrowful Mother:

"Let me to my latest breath,  
In my body bear the death  
Of that dying Son of thine."<sup>8</sup>

**BEARING THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST:** As the hatred of Christ's enemies increases and the time of His crucifixion draws near, the liturgy invites us and urges us by every means at its command to share in Christ's sufferings. We cannot, like St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena, bear on our bodies the wounds of His passion, but we do participate in the renewal of His mysteries in so far as we bear His stripes and wounds upon our souls.

If Passiontide has found us unprepared to celebrate the "great week" with fitting dispositions, we can still join our prayer with that of all the members of Christ's Mystic Body and repeat in the words of the Offertory for the feast of the Seven Sorrows: "Be mindful, O Virgin Mother of God, when thou standest in the sight of the Lord, to speak good things for us, and to turn away His anger from us."

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. Into what three periods is the Paschal cycle divided? What is the duration of the following divisions of time: Septuagesima? Lent? Passiontide? Eastertide? time after Pentecost?
2. How many Sundays are included in the Septuagesimal or pre-Lenten season? How do we account for their names? When did the Church establish a universal observance in regard to the beginning and duration of the pre-Lenten season?
3. How does the liturgy for Septuagesima indicate that it is a transitional period or a distant preparation for Easter?

7. The Liturgical Year. Gueranger, Friday in Passion Week.

8. Praying the Mass, Butler-Clendenin, pp. 31-32.

4. Read the Gospels for Septuagesima and Quinquagesima Sundays, and indicate the lessons which the Church would have us learn during the observance of this season.
5. Why is forty considered a significant number in the Scriptures? From what old English word does Lent take its name? What did it mean?
6. What is a Stational Mass? a Stational church? How did the early Christians celebrate a Stational Mass?
7. Read the Collect for the Thursday following the third Sunday of Lent as an example of how the texts of the Masses sometimes reflect the influence of the Stational church. What is the Stational church for Ash Wednesday? For what is it noted?
8. Describe the ceremony from which Ash Wednesday takes its name. Read selections from the prayers used in the solemn blessing of the ashes.
9. Comment on the Ash Wednesday ceremony of early Christian times. What ruling in regard to the celebration of Ash Wednesday was made by the Council of Beneventum in the eleventh century?
10. What inward dispositions should animate the faithful who participate in the ceremonies and liturgical functions of the Lenten season?
11. How may the members of the Mystical Body join themselves more closely with Christ during Lent? How should prayer, fasting, and acts of charity be performed in order to be most pleasing to God? How should our Lenten sacrifices be offered?

## PART II

12. Explain how the liturgy presents the example of Christ during Lent. Illustrate by reading one or two Gospels selected from the Lenten Masses.
13. What is the general characteristic of the Lenten Epistles and Gospels? Illustrate this point by reading the Epistles and Gospels for the Monday of the first week and for the Friday of the third week in Lent.
14. What special two-fold preparation formerly characterized the entire season of Lent?
15. Who are the catechumens and penitents the Church has in mind today? Read a number of the beautiful prayers of the Lenten liturgy which are said over the people.
16. By what names are the first four Sundays of Lent sometimes designated? How and why does the liturgy of Laetare Sunday differ from that of the other Sundays?
17. On entering the church on Passion Sunday, what change do we observe? How do liturgists variously interpret the symbolism connected with the veiling of the crucifix? What other regulations are peculiar to Passiontide?
18. What feast of our Blessed Lady is celebrated on Friday of Passion week? What are her Seven Sorrows?
19. Read the entire "Stabat Mater" Sequence.
20. Recite from memory the Offertory prayer for the feast of the Seven Sorrows. Read the Epistle and Gospel and the proper parts of the Sunday Mass and comment on them.

## VI

## Palm Sunday to Holy Thursday

## PART I

Few liturgical memorial observances have such a long recorded history as the ceremonies of Holy Week or the "Great Week" as it was formerly called. The entire seven days are dedicated to the re-enactment of the passion and death of our Lord.

**HOLY WEEK:** On Palm Sunday the liturgy commemorates Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; on Wednesday, Judas' bargain with the chief priests and magistrates for the betrayal of Jesus; on Holy Thursday, the Last Supper, our Lord's agony in the garden, and His abandonment by His disciples; on Good Friday, Christ's condemnation, crucifixion, and death; and on Holy Saturday, His repose in the tomb.

**ANTIQUITY OF THE CELEBRATION:** It is believed that even during apostolic times, some public observance was made in remembrance of the last week of our Lord's life on earth. All of the Gospels and particularly those according to St. Matthew and St. Luke record the happenings of those days. We do not know that any liturgical formulas were developed, but as early as the year 329, St. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote of the severe fast which lasted through "those six holy and great days (preceding Easter Sunday) which are a symbol of the creation of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Another record dating from 388 relates that Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was re-enacted on Palm Sunday by great throngs of Christians who assembled on the Mount of Olives where they sang psalms and listened to appropriate readings from the Scriptures, after which they went in procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, escorting the bishop and carrying the symbolic olive and palm branches.

In time this annual observance spread from Jerusalem over the entire Christian world. The procession with blessed palms, which is an integral part of the Palm Sunday services today, is a remnant of the dramatic demonstration of earlier ages.

**LITURGICAL DRAMATIZATIONS:** At no time in the year does the liturgy employ symbolic dramatic action more effectively than during Holy Week. Even the person of Christ is shown by symbols. In the procession on Palm Sunday, He was formerly represented by the Book of the Gospels or by a statue; today His place is taken by a priest or bishop. On Good Friday the cross represents Christ, and on Holy Saturday the lighted paschal candle is considered to be a figure of His body, soul, and divinity.

**INTERPRETING THE CEREMONIES:** These ceremonies, beautiful and significant as they are, mean little if they are not understood by the members of the laity who attend the services. It is the intention of the Church that we participate intelligently in the Holy Week functions so that we may be competent to apply the lessons which they convey, and also that we may receive abundantly the graces proper to this sacred time. We can do this by following the texts and rites in the Missal or in a Holy Week manual. It is unfortunate, therefore, that

1. Catholic Encyclopedia, VII, p. 436.



so few of our Catholic people have the opportunity of attending the solemn major services of Holy Week.

There are two themes expressed in the liturgy of Palm Sunday—one of joy as signified by the procession, and the other of sorrow suggested by the reading of Christ's passion as recorded in the holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

**BLESSING OF THE PALMS:** The liturgical procession of Palm Sunday preceded, by at least three hundred years, the blessing of the palms from which the day takes its name. This ceremony is especially interesting since its structure resembles the rite of the Mass itself. It has an Introit, Collect, Epistle, Tract, Gospel, Preface, and Sanctus. In fact, the ceremony is sometimes called a "dry Mass."

The palms are blessed, as the prayers themselves indicate, in remembrance of the blessing which God gave to "the people who went forth to meet Jesus, bearing branches of palms" and to signify Christ's triumphs over the "prince of death."<sup>2</sup> A palm branch is a symbol of victory.

The sacramental nature of the blessing of the palms is alluded to in the words: "that into whatever place they may be brought, those who dwell in the place" may obtain divine blessing; and further "that they (the palms) may be serviceable to all Thy people unto salvation."<sup>3</sup> When we bring the blessed palms into our homes it is well to keep in mind the intentions for which the Church hallows them.

**THE PROCESSION:** The procession which takes place immediately after the blessing and distribution of the palms was a joyous social ceremony during the Middle Ages. All of the clergy and the people of the city joined it as it traced its way from the principal church to one usually situated outside the walls where the palms were blessed. In some places the Blessed Sacrament was carried in the procession.

Today the celebrant of the Mass, the deacon and subdeacon, the clergy in the order of their rank, and the acolytes, all bearing blessed palms, usually make up the procession, although in some communities it is still customary for the laity also to take part. The procession proceeds out of the church, after which the door is closed. On returning the subdeacon knocks on the door with the shaft of the cross and it is opened to allow the procession to enter. This ceremony reminds us that Christ by His death on the cross opened the gates of heaven which had been closed by sin. The hymn "Gloria, laus," "Glory and praise to Thee, Redeemer blest," and the antiphons sung during the procession, all refer to Christ's entry into the Holy City.

**MASS FOR PALM SUNDAY:** The jubilant mood of the liturgy changes with the beginning of the Mass. Instead of the usual Gospel, the history of the passion of our Lord according to St. Matthew is read. In a solemn high Mass it is sung by three cantors or deacons who impersonate the Evangelist, Christ, and the other speakers, respectively. The members of the congregation hold the palms in their right hand during the reading of the Passion and the Gospel.

**MONDAY, TUESDAY, AND WEDNESDAY:** The Gospel read in the Mass for Monday is St. John's account of the supper in Bethania (Bethany). Lazarus was there, Martha served, and Mary anointed our Lord's feet with a sweet smelling ointment. Judas asked why the ointment was not sold and the money given

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup>. Prayers for the Blessing of the Palms.

to the poor. Jesus rebuked him in these words: "Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial."<sup>4</sup> On Tuesday and Wednesday, accounts of the passion according to St. Mark and St. Luke, respectively, are read.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**TENEBRAE:** On the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, a prayer service called Tenebrae (darkness) is observed in many churches. It is really the recitation of Matins and Lauds of the divine office, which originally took place during the night towards morning, but later was anticipated so that all of the faithful could be present. The Tenebrae chanted on Wednesday, for instance, is really a part of the morning office of Maundy Thursday.

These recitations, which consist of psalms, the Lamentations of Jeremias, and lessons and responses, are grouped to emphasize a different theme for each day, and all have reference to Christ's sufferings and death. The Thursday office seems to center around the treachery of Judas; that for Friday is concerned with our Lord's death and burial; while the Matins for Saturday, which are sung on Good Friday evening, show us the Church watching at the tomb. There is, however, a note of hope which foreshadows the resurrection.

**THE TENEBRAE CANDLESTICK:** Matins, as we have stated, were formerly recited during the night and it was, therefore, necessary to illuminate the Church, or at least the sanctuary. The "Tenebrae hearse" (harrow), or the triangular candlestick, which stands on the Epistle side of the sanctuary during the service, comes down to us from those days of antiquity. Like so many other externals of the liturgy which had a particular use in earlier times, this candlestick is retained because of a striking symbolism which is attached to the ceremony of extinguishing the candles at various times during the Tenebrae service.

**SYMBOLISM OF THE CANDLES:** The candlestick holds fifteen candles; fourteen of them are usually of yellow wax, while the principal one, which stands in the center, is of white wax. Liturgists agree that the white candle represents Christ, but the symbolism of the other fourteen is variously interpreted. Some authorities believe they represent the prophets of the Old Law who gave testimony of Christ, and the gradual extinguishing of the candles as the service proceeds, shows them being persecuted or put to death. Others see in the ceremony the flight of Christ's disciples when they learned that He had been betrayed and condemned to death.

**SIGNIFICANT CEREMONIES:** The center or principal candle is not extinguished, but is hidden behind the altar for a short time to indicate that Christ's enemies believed that they had done away with Him. At the end of the office a great noise is made by the members of the choir who strike their books on the benches. This represents the earthquake that occurred when Christ died. Immediately the candle is brought back still burning and put in its place in the candlestick as an emblem of His glorious resurrection.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY:** In the liturgy, Thursday in Holy Week is called Maundy Thursday, the English word "maundy" being taken from the Latin "mandatum" (commandment), the first word of the prayers which are sung

4. John XII, 7.

during the ceremony known as the washing of the feet. The day is also referred to as the Thursday of the Lord's Supper.

**ANCIENT OBSERVANCES:** The ancient observance of Maundy Thursday was based on four distinct elements: (1) the reconciliation of public penitents, who received sacramental absolution after performing penance for their sins during Lent; (2) the consecration of the holy oils, pointing to the baptism and confirmation of the catechumens; (3) the Mass with the commemoration of the passion of our Lord; and (4) the washing of the feet.

In the fourth century, two Masses were celebrated, one in the morning and the other in the evening after the manner of the Lord's Supper. The evening meal was taken before the latter Mass, and on this occasion the faithful were permitted to receive Holy Communion although they were not fasting. "The **Gelasian Sacramentary** (sixth to seventh century) mentions three Masses: one at the reconciliation of penitents, one at the consecration of the holy oils, and one in the evening in commemoration of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament and of the betrayal of Judas." <sup>5</sup>

**SOLEMN OBSERVANCE OF TODAY:** Today the solemn observance of Maundy Thursday begins with the Mass of the Last Supper, during which, in cathedral churches, the bishop consecrates the holy oils. After Mass the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose takes place. The public recitation of vespers follows in churches where it is customary; after vespers the altars are stripped of their linens and ornaments. In monasteries and in many cathedral churches, the clergy meet to perform the ceremony of the washing of the feet, called "mandatum."

**TWO-FOLD CHARACTER OF THE MASS:** Only one Mass is celebrated in each church on Maundy Thursday. As an expression of joy and thanksgiving for the gift of the Holy Eucharist, the altar is adorned with flowers, the crucifix is veiled in white, the priests are robed in white vestments, and the Gloria is sung to the accompaniment of the organ and to the ringing of bells.

The liturgy, however, is more concerned with our Lord's death-agony on the Mount of Olives, so the organ is silent during the remainder of the Mass and wooden clappers are substituted for the bells. The bells are not heard again until the Gloria of the Mass on Holy Saturday. The observance of "the still days" was begun in the eighth century.

The Collect suggests the reconciliation of the penitents by contrasting the punishment which Judas received for his crime and the reward that came to the good thief for his final repentance. The kiss of peace is omitted in bitter remembrance of the treacherous kiss of Judas.

**THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FAITHFUL:** The participation of the faithful in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, which is so solemnly celebrated on Holy Thursday, is fittingly expressed by a religious writer. "At the Consecration our church becomes for us the Upper Room in which we of our Lord's household are gathered for the celebration of our Pasch; the altar is our Calvary." <sup>6</sup>

**PROCESSION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:** Two large hosts are consecrated during the Mass, one of which is reserved for the Mass of the Pre-sanctified on Good Friday. This Host is placed in a special chalice, covered with

5. Living With the Church, Haering-Bularzik, p. 61.

6. The Lenten Mind of the Church, Bularzik, *Orate Fratres*, Mar. 23, 1935, p. 203.

a white silk veil, and borne in solemn procession to an adjoining chapel or to a side altar in the church itself. The "altar of repose," where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, is adorned with lights and flowers. It is customary for the faithful to visit the churches where the sacred body of Christ is publicly venerated, in order to commemorate the institution of the Holy Eucharist and to make atonement for the insults which were offered to our Lord during His passion. Plenary and partial indulgences are attached to such visits when certain conditions are complied with.

**THE INTENTION OF THE LITURGY:** In some localities, especially in cities, this devotion is sometimes improperly called "visiting sepulchres." The idea is contrary to the intention of the liturgy. The rubric ordains that honor be expressed by lights and flowers and the richest of ornaments—things unbecoming to a tomb. Another reason is that it would be inconsistent to commemorate Christ's death before the Church celebrates His crucifixion.

**HOLY OILS:** The consecration of the three oils is performed by the bishop of the diocese officiating pontifically during the solemn Mass in the cathedral church. The blessing of the oil of the sick takes place before the Pater Noster. It consists of an exorcism and a brief prayer pronounced by the bishop over the urn or vessel containing the oil. During the blessing of the holy chrism and the oil of the catechumens, which occurs after the Communion, the bishop is assisted by twelve priests, seven deacons, and seven subdeacons.

**STRIPPING THE ALTARS:** The practice of stripping the altars comes from the symbolism of the altar itself which is a representation of Christ. While performing this rite the priest recites Psalm 21 in which these words occur: "They parted My garments amongst them: and upon My vesture they cast lots." All ornaments and cloths are removed and since the tabernacle is empty, the door is left open. Thus Christ is represented as stripped of His clothing and abandoned to die on the cross.

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. How is each day of Holy Week dedicated to the re-enactment of the passion and death of Christ?
2. What evidence do we have that Holy Week was observed as early as the fourth century? How was Palm Sunday celebrated in Jerusalem about the year 388?
3. Explain how the liturgy makes use of various symbols to represent Christ during the Holy Week ceremonies.
4. What is the mind of the Church in regard to the intelligent participation of the faithful in the Lenten services?
5. What two themes are suggested by the liturgy of Palm Sunday?
6. Which is older, the procession or the blessing of the palms? In what sense does the ceremony of the blessing of the palms suggest the structure of the Mass? Why does the Church bless the palms? How is the sacramental nature of the blessing alluded to in the prayers?
7. Describe the Palm Sunday procession as it was held in the Middle Ages. How is the ceremony observed today?

8. When and how does the solemn observance of Holy Week really begin? During what parts of the Mass are the palms held by the members of the congregation?
9. Read the Gospel for Monday of Holy Week. Explain why it is so appropriately chosen. What is a distinguishing feature of the liturgy for Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week?

## PART II

10. Discuss the Tenebrae, the prayer service for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings. What theme seems to be emphasized each day?
11. What is the origin of the triangular candlestick used in the Tenebrae service? How do liturgists explain the symbolism of the fifteen candles?
12. What significant ceremonies occur at the end of the Tenebrae service?
13. Why is Holy Thursday also called Maundy Thursday?
14. On what four elements was the ancient observance of Maundy Thursday based? How was the day observed during the fourth century?
15. What ceremonies are included in the Maundy Thursday observance of today?
16. Explain how the liturgy of Holy Thursday expresses joy for the gift of the Holy Eucharist and sorrow for our Lord's agony in the Garden of Olives.
17. Read the Collect for Holy Thursday. Observe how it suggests the reconciliation of penitents.
18. How should we think of the church and the altar on Holy Thursday?
19. How is the Blessed Sacrament carried to the "altar of repose"? Why is the body of Christ publicly venerated on Holy Thursday?
20. Why is it improper to speak of visiting churches as "visiting sepulchres"?
21. When and by whom are the holy oils consecrated?
22. What symbolism is suggested by the stripping of the altars?

## VII

## The Christian Pasch

## PART I

Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday constitute "the celebration of the Christian Pasch; for the Christian Pasch in the full sense of the word embraces the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Our Saviour."<sup>1</sup>

**PARASCEVE:** The Gospels refer to the day on which Christ died, as the Parasceve, a designation which the liturgy still retains. It is a Greek word meaning preparation—preparation for the Pasch. Under the Old Law every Friday was a day of preparation when the food which was to be taken on the Sabbath was provided and made ready. The Church wishes to impress upon our minds the fact that she celebrates this day in fulfillment of the paschal rites of the Old Testament and that Christ, the true paschal Lamb, is slain for the spiritual food and for the salvation of mankind.

**GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES:** The liturgical theme for Good Friday is the death of Christ, the Son of God; the services, therefore reflect the terrible tragedy of Calvary. The altar is bare, the tabernacle is empty, and the cross, veiled in purple, stands between unlit candles. The sanctuary is a scene of profound mourning and desolation. **Good Friday is the only day in the year on which Mass is not celebrated.** "The Church ordains that no Mass shall be said on this day, because she is so absorbed by the thought of the great and awful Sacrifice offered this day on Calvary, that she refrains from renewing upon her altars the immolation of the divine Victim, contenting herself with partaking of the great mystery of Communion."<sup>2</sup>

The celebrant, robed in black vestments, begins the ceremonies of the day by prostrating himself on the steps of the altar and praying in silence while the acolytes spread a single cloth upon the altar, and the Missal is put in its customary place on the Epistle side.

**LITURGICAL DIVISIONS OF THE SERVICE:** The ceremonies consist of four distinct functions: (1) an instruction and prayer service which preserves the ancient form of the Mass of the Catechumens; (2) the Collects or prayers for the needs of the Church and of mankind; (3) the uncovering and veneration of the cross; and (4) the Mass of the Presanctified.

**INSTRUCTION OR PRAYER SERVICE:** The first or preparatory service begins with a passage from the Prophecy of Osee which suggests the thought of our Lord's sufferings, death, and resurrection, followed by a Tract which calls to mind the last judgment. The celebrant then reads a Collect (the Collect of the Mass on Holy Thursday) which contrasts the punishment of Judas and the reward of the penitent thief. Another scriptural lesson, taken from the Book of Exodus, refers to the paschal lamb which prefigures the Lamb of God. Its tract is a part of Psalm 139 and is presented as a prayer from the human lips of our Lord asking His heavenly Father to deliver Him from His enemies. This part of the Good Friday service closes with the passion as recorded in the holy Gospel according to St. John.

1. Liturgical Catechism, MacMahon, p. 252.

2. Liturgy of the Roman Missal, Leduc-Baudot, p. 263.

**CHANTING THE PASSION:** The passion as recorded by St. John is most appropriately reserved for the Good Friday service, since this apostle, of all the evangelists, was an eye-witness to the scenes which he describes. In the solemn performance of the Good Friday observances, the liturgy emphasizes the mournful theme of the Gospel by the alternate or antiphonal chanting of the parts. In ancient times the tragedy was retold by two or more persons in the form of a solemn chant. The narrative or the historical part was usually taken by the baritone voice, while the tenor and bass sang the words of the principal characters. The passion as it is sung today is a remnant of this ancient manner of chanting.

**THE COLLECTS:** The second part of the Good Friday liturgy is composed of prayers which are said for the spiritual and temporal needs of all men from the Holy Father down to the lowliest member of the laity. These prayers are all-embracing in that they also remember heretics, schismatics, Jews, and pagans—potential members of Christ's Mystical Body, whom He has invited to enter His kingdom. They follow the ancient form of the litanies which were said for the catechumens after they had been instructed and dismissed from the Church before the celebration of the Mass of the Faithful. They have no relation to the Lenten season or the passion of our Lord, but they are most appropriate for the Good Friday liturgy because Christ died for all classes of people. Hence the Church prays for all.

**THE VENERATION OF THE CROSS:** The third and most impressive part of the ceremonies had its origin in the fourth century shortly after the discovery of the true cross by St. Helena. The cross was kept in Jerusalem where, on each recurring Good Friday, it was exposed for public veneration. Great crowds of pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem to pay homage to Christ by honoring the wood of the cross on which He was crucified. It then became customary to send particles of the true cross to the various churches, so that a greater number of the faithful could participate in the ceremony. In churches that did not possess such relics, the ceremony was carried out with an ordinary blessed crucifix.

**CEREMONY OF UNVEILING AND VENERATION OF THE CROSS:** The celebrant, having divested himself of his black chasuble, takes the crucifix which one of the ministers has removed from the center of the altar, and gradually unveils it, three times intoning the words: "Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the Savior of the world." All except the celebrant kneel while the choir responds, "Come, let us adore." The crucifix is then placed on a cushion prepared for it at the foot of the altar, and after removing their shoes, all the clergy in the sanctuary kneel and kiss the wood of the cross.

While this ceremony is taking place the choir chants the "Improperia" or the Reproaches—the sad complaints which Jesus addresses to the Jews, chiding them for their ingratitude. The faithful are also given an opportunity to make their adoration of the cross.

**THE MASS OF THE PRESANCTIFIED:** The fourth part of the liturgy, notwithstanding the name which it bears, is not a Mass, but a solemn Communion service in which the celebrant alone receives the Holy Eucharist. In earlier times the faithful were also permitted to communicate on Good Friday.

After the sacred Host is brought in procession from the repository to the altar, the celebrant takes It out of the chalice and lays It upon the altar. He then pours a little wine and water into the chalice. After reciting the Pater

Noster, he elevates the Host for the adoration of the faithful, and then breaks It into three parts, placing the smallest particle in the chalice; he now communicates by partaking of the sacred Host and the particle with the wine in the chalice. After purifying the chalice, he recites in a low voice: "Grant, O Lord, that what we have taken with our mouth, we may receive with a pure heart: and that from a temporal gift it may become to us an eternal remedy."

**CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICES:** "This strange conclusion of the service is most impressive. It leaves in the devout soul the feeling of being on Calvary at the ninth hour, enveloped in darkness. The very silence re-echoes the Savior's dying word: 'It is consummated.' But it also leaves the impression of incompleteness. And rightly so, for the crucifixion and death of Christ constitute merely the first part of the work of the Redemption; it remains incomplete until it is perfected by the resurrection. The Good Friday liturgy closes like a musical piece of which the final chord is not played; it leaves us in suspense awaiting the joyous celebration of Easter." <sup>3</sup>

**TRANSFERENCE OF CELEBRATION:** It is becoming customary to transfer the celebration of the Mass of the Presanctified to the three hours after noon. This practice is not, of course, contrary to Canon Law, since the holy Sacrifice itself may begin within one hour after noon. The edifying rule of closing shops and business institutions from 12:00 until 3:00 o'clock on Good Friday afternoon is also becoming more widespread. Catholics usually try to spend this time in the churches. The transference of the celebration of the Mass of the Presanctified to the afternoon gives them an opportunity of assisting at a liturgical function in place of the non-liturgical "Tre-Ore" devotion.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOLY SATURDAY LITURGY:** Until the eleventh century, Holy Saturday was regarded as our Lord's day of Sabbath rest in the tomb. Formerly, as on Good Friday, the Mass was not celebrated, but at night a solemn watch or Easter vigil was held. In the early morning, just before the end of the watch, the catechumens who had persevered through the long period of probation and instruction, were plunged beneath the waters of the baptism, symbolically going down to death with Christ. Their rising out of the water, suggestive of His resurrection, was their own rebirth to a life of grace with Him. The Holy Saturday liturgy is, therefore, built around two themes: the resurrection of our Lord, and the spiritual resurrection of His Mystical Body.

The Mass at which the newly baptized received their first Communion, was really offered on Easter Sunday, but later became a part of the Holy Saturday liturgy. This explains why the Church puts away all signs of sorrow and gives herself up to the contemplation and anticipation of the joy that will come with the dawn of Easter morning.

**LITURGICAL DIVISIONS:** The liturgy for Holy Saturday embraces (1) the blessing of the new fire; (2) the blessing of the paschal candle; (3) the reading of the Prophecies, the blessing of the baptismal font, and the Litany of the Saints; and (4) Mass and vespers.

**BLESSING THE NEW FIRE:** This ceremony originated from the necessity of lighting the dark church for the vigil services. This was done by striking a flint and igniting a lamp or a candle from the spark. While it has always been customary for the Church to bless all the elements which she uses in her services, the blessing of the new fire did not become a part of the Holy Satur-

3. Notes on the Good Friday Liturgy, Westhoff, *Orate Fratres*, Feb. 22, 1936, p. 162.



day liturgy until the middle of the ninth century when Pope Leo IV introduced it to give a Christian character to the bonfires lighted at this season to honor certain pagan deities.

**CEREMONIES:** The blessing of the new fire and the five grains of incense takes place outside of the church or within the vestibule. The "new fire" is produced, as it was in ancient times, by striking a flint and kindling coals from the spark. A three-branch candle, mounted on a reed, is thrice lighted from the new fire at intervals as the celebrant and his assistants advance in procession to the sanctuary to announce the joyful tidings of the resurrection of our Lord.

**BLESSING THE PASCHAL CANDLE:** The paschal candle set in a large candle-stick standing on the Gospel side of the sanctuary, is now blessed. During the blessing the deacon chants the "Exsultet," so-called because it is the first word of one of the most glorious hymns of praise in the Latin liturgy. It sets forth the symbolic meaning of the paschal candle, recalls the dark night of exile of the Israelites and their delivery by the light of a pillar of fire, and ends in a prayer for the pope, the bishop, and all the people. The authorship of the "Exsultet" is attributed to St. Augustine. The blessing of the paschal candle is the only instance in the liturgy where a solemn blessing is imparted by the deacon.

**SYMBOLISM OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE:** "The ornamented, stately candle is a figure of Christ. Unlighted at first, it represents Him in His death, while the grains of incense imbedded in it recall the sweet-smelling spices used for embalming His body. There are five grains, to signify His five wounds, and they are inserted in the form of a cross. The deacon lights the paschal candle with one of the branch lights upon the rod: now the burning candle represents Christ gloriously risen from the grave. From this the other candles upon the altar and the lamps in the church are ignited to signify that the faithful have their new life and their resurrection from Christ."<sup>4</sup>

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**READING THE PROPHECIES:** We must again recall old customs to explain the practice of reading the Prophecies at this time during the ceremonies. They have come down to us from the days when solemn Baptism was given to the catechumens. These twelve Old Testament lessons were read from the ambo and were the final instructions given to the neophytes on the significance, effects, and fruits of the Sacrament of Baptism which they had received or were about to receive. Each reading is now followed by a prayer beseeching God to grant the grace of redemption.

**BLESSING THE BAPTISMAL FONT:** After the reading of the last prophecy the priest and his ministers go in procession to the baptismal font, bearing the cross and the paschal candle. On the way this Tract, sometimes called the "Tract of the Catechumens" is sung: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted for the living God: when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, while they say to me daily: Where is thy God?"

4. The Lenten Mind of the Church, Bularzik, *Orate Fratres*, March 23, 1935, p. 206.

**CEREMONIES:** The font is blessed with ceremonies that are full of symbolism and mystery. (1) The priest divides the water in the form of a cross, indicating that all grace comes from Christ crucified; (2) he touches the water with his hand, praying that it may be freed from evil spirits; (3) he blesses it three times with the sign of the cross in the name of the Holy Trinity; (4) he casts some of the water to the four parts of the earth, indicating that baptismal graces flow over the earth like the rivers of paradise; (5) he breathes upon the water in the form of a cross three times desiring that God may infuse it with His Holy Spirit; (6) he plunges the paschal candle into the water three times, praying that the Holy Ghost may descend upon it as He did at the baptism of Christ in the River Jordan; (7) he again breathes upon the water, this time in the form of the Greek letter "psi" (as in *psyche*, meaning breath as a sign of life or spirit); (8) he mixes the oil of the catechumens and holy chrism with the water to signify that by the Sacrament of Baptism the faithful are consecrated to God and given strength to overcome their spiritual enemies; (9) finally, the priest concludes the blessing by mingling the holy oils with the water and spreading them over the font.

**EASTER WATER:** Before the holy oils are poured into the font an acolyte fills a vessel with some of the water, a part of which is used in asperging the faithful; the remainder is reserved for the people to take to their homes. This is popularly known as Easter water and should not be confused with the baptismal water.

**THE WHITE GARMENT:** In early Christian times, after the blessing of the font, the catechumens were baptized and clothed in a white garment. This significant ceremony is still retained in the baptismal ritual accompanied by the words: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen."

**RENEWING BAPTISMAL VOWS:** The ceremonies and prayers used in the blessing of the font express most admirably the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism in the soul. They should inspire the faithful to make a grateful renewal of their baptismal vows and a sincere resolution to confess their sins and to receive Holy Communion so that they, like the catechumens of old, may be worthy to appear on Easter morning in garments that are "without stain."

**THE LITANY OF THE SAINTS:** After the blessing of the font the procession returns to the sanctuary chanting the Litany of the Saints. It is shorter than the usual form, but the petitions and the invocations are said twice. This expression of the doctrine of the communion of saints, which, of course, remembers all the faithful, was formerly a special prayer for the newly baptized who had just become children of the Church—the Mystical Body of Christ, which includes the saints in heaven, the militant faithful on earth, and the suffering souls in purgatory.

**THE MASS OF THE RESURRECTION:** The solemn service of Easter Sunday really begins with the Mass and vespers of Holy Saturday. We must bear in mind that this Mass, which has formed a part of the liturgy since early Christian antiquity, was formerly celebrated on Easter morning. It was essentially a Mass of thanksgiving for the newly baptized whom the Church had just brought into her fold and who for the first time participated in the "Mysterics" from which they had previously been excluded.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MASS:** There are, therefore, certain characteristics that distinguish the liturgy of this Mass. Since the celebrant is already at the altar there is no Introit or entry; the Kyrie at the end of the litany is the Kyrie of the Mass, but the priest says it after the usual preliminary prayers; the Mass has no Credo, no Offertory verse, no Agnus Dei, and no Communion verse.

At the Gloria the bells which have been silent since the Gloria of Holy Thursday, are rung joyously; the violet coverings are removed from the statues and pictures. The Collect invokes God, "Who makest this most sacred **night** illustrious by the glory of the resurrection of our Lord," and asks that the spirit of adoption be preserved in "the new children of Thy family." The Gospel describes the meeting of the "angel of the Lord" and the holy women at the empty sepulchre.

**VESPERS:** The recitation of vespers concludes the Mass. The service consists of the psalm "Laudate Dominum," preceded and followed by the triple alleluia antiphon, and the "Magnificat," after which follows the vesper prayer, in which God is asked to pour forth "the spirit of charity" upon the newly baptized that they may "live in concord" with one another.

Thus concludes one of the longest services of the entire liturgy. It is, however, many hours shorter than it was in the day of our early Christian ancestors. "Although the former catechumenate no longer exists, the ancient liturgy of Holy Saturday is rightly retained to this day because Baptism, too, is a resurrection to a new and better life."<sup>5</sup>

**EASTER SUNDAY:** Easter is the oldest, the greatest, and the most joyful festival in the church year. In the liturgy it is called the "Sunday of the Resurrection of our Lord," but its more ancient name is "Sanctum Pascha"—the Holy Passover—referring to our Lord's passage from death to life.

**THE CHRISTIAN PASCH:** The Jewish pasch memorialized the "passing over" of the destroying angel and the delivery of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt. It was while Christ and His apostles were observing this feast that our Lord made Himself the Lamb of the new pasch, and ordained that a **perpetual remembrance** of His Sacrifice should be liturgically re-presented until the end of the world.

At no time during the year is this Sacrifice more fittingly celebrated than on Easter Sunday. "It is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation," says the Easter Preface, "that at all times, but more especially on this day we should extol Thy glory, O Lord, when Christ our Pasch was sacrificed . . . Who by dying hath overcome our death, and by rising again hath restored our life."

**LITURGICAL TEXTS:** The Church expresses her joy in the resurrection by the use of flowers, light, incense, music, and the richest of vestments and by liturgical texts and actions. The first words of the Introit sound the keynote of the Easter Mass: "I arose, and am still with thee, alleluia." Christ's mystical presence is symbolized by the beautiful paschal candle burning in the sanctuary—its five nails marking the wounds which He showed to His heavenly Father on the resurrection morning. The Sequence, "Victimae Paschali"—the Paschal Victim, which is a dialogue between the Church and Mary Magdalen, introduces the theme of the Gospel:

5. Living with the Church, Haering-Bularzik, p. 84.

“What thou sawest, Mary, say,  
 As thou wentest on the way.  
 I saw the tomb wherein the living One had lain;  
 I saw His glory as He rose again.”

As on Holy Saturday, the Gospel relates the meeting of the three women and the angel at our Lord's sepulchre, but this time it is in the words of St. Mark that the “good tidings” of the resurrection are announced. (The Easter Mass of today was formerly the **second** Mass of Easter Sunday.) The Epistle and the Communion prayer refer to the Paschal feast and direct how it should be celebrated: “Christ our Pasch is immolated, alleluia: therefore, let us feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.” (Communion)

**LIVING WITH CHRIST THROUGH THE LITURGY:** If we have harmonized our prayers and actions with the sacred liturgy of the Mass on Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, we have suffered with Christ in His passion; we have died with Him on the cross; we have gone down with Him into the tomb; and risen with Him on Easter morning. As catechumens, we have renewed the vows that we made at Baptism through the lips of our sponsors; as humble penitents, we have received absolution from our sins through the Sacrament of Penance; and as banquet guests of God, we have been fed at the Communion table with the paschal sacrament. Our hearts are filled with fresh, invigorating, spiritual joy.

“The reason why the liturgy is the unfailing source of this indispensable human emotion is that the liturgy itself consists not merely of externals but **contains the reality which it symbolizes:** it imparts divine grace, the life-principle of rejuvenation. It is not surprising, therefore, that all who participate **digne, attente, devote,** (becomingly, attentively, devoutly,) therein should discover their whole being in full resonance with the unceasing, joyous **alleluia.** Not only the initiated, but all who even remotely unite in the Church's Easter festivity will reap this joyous fruit of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. Good Friday is designated in the liturgy as “Parasceve.” How does the name suggest the paschal rites of the Old Law?
2. How do the altar, the sanctuary, and the service for Good Friday reflect the tragedy of the death of Christ? How does the celebrant begin the ceremonies of the day?
3. What four functions are embraced in the Good Friday service?
4. What readings are included in the instruction or prayer service?
5. Why is the passion as recorded by St. John most appropriate for the Good Friday service? How does the manner of chanting emphasize the mournful theme of the Gospel?
6. For whom are the Collects or prayers in the second part of the Good Friday service offered? Why are they so appropriate for the liturgy of the day?
7. Give the history of the veneration of the cross.
8. Describe the ceremony of the unveiling and veneration of the cross.

6. The Apostolate, *Orate Fratres*, April 18, 1936, p. 269.

9. What is the Mass of the Presanctified? Describe the service, and repeat the prayer with which it ends.
10. Read the paragraph commenting on the strange conclusion of this part of the Good Friday liturgy.
11. How does transferring the Mass of the Presanctified to the noon hour, encourage a more seemly observance of Good Friday?
12. How was Holy Saturday observed until the eleventh century? Describe the baptism of the catechumens. Why does the liturgy anticipate or celebrate the joys of Easter on Holy Saturday?
13. What four liturgical functions does the Holy Saturday service embrace?
14. Give the origin of the blessing of the new fire. Describe the ceremony which accompanies this blessing.
15. What beautiful hymn of praise is chanted by the deacon during the blessing of the paschal candle? Read the "Exsultet" and point out some of its most striking passages. What is the symbolism of the paschal candle?

## PART II

16. How did the custom of reading the Prophecies originate? For what intention does the Church pray at the end of each reading?
17. When does the blessing of the baptismal font take place? What particular Tract is sung during the procession?
18. Describe the symbolic blessing of the baptismal font.
19. What is Easter water? What prayer is said when the "white garment" is given in Baptism? How should the prayers and ceremonies of Baptism inspire the faithful in regard to renewing their baptismal vows?
20. Explain why the Litany of the Saints is incorporated in the Holy Saturday liturgy?
21. Why is the Mass of the resurrection really celebrated on Holy Saturday?
22. What are the distinguishing characteristics of the Mass of Holy Saturday?
23. What service concludes the ceremonies of Holy Saturday? Why is this ancient liturgy retained today?
24. What is the greatest festival of the church year? Why is Easter Sunday sometimes referred to as the "Holy Passover"? How is the Christian pasch connected with the observance of the Jewish pasch? Why is it most fittingly celebrated on Easter Sunday?
25. What expressions of joy does the liturgy employ in the Easter Mass? Read the beautiful Sequence "Victimae Paschali."
26. Compare the Gospels which are read on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. Explain why the Gospels for both days relate the story of our Lord's resurrection.
27. How should Christians try to live in order to participate in the graces of the Christian pasch?
28. Read the last paragraph of the lesson and explain why the joys and graces of the Easter season are experienced by Christians over the entire world.

## VIII

## Eastertide and Time after Pentecost

## PART I

The liturgical division of time known as Eastertide or Paschaltide begins on Holy Saturday and continues until the Saturday after Pentecost. It is a season of joy and festivity in which are celebrated three glorious mysteries: the resurrection of our Lord, His ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Forty days of the period commemorate the resurrection, the greatest event in the earthly life of Christ and the very foundation of our faith. St. Paul says in his first Epistle to the Corinthians: "And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."<sup>1</sup> Ten days are given over to the remembrance of His ascension, and the remainder of the season, the octave of Pentecost, observes the mystery of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

**LITURGICAL REGULATIONS:** Practices peculiar to the season are: the obligation of the faithful to receive Holy Communion, or as it is usually called, making one's Easter duty; the frequent singing of the Alleluia in the Mass; and the substitution of the *Regina Cæli* for the *Angelus*. The custom of saying the former prayer while standing comes from an ancient practice of standing while at prayer to honor, even by the posture of the body, the resurrection of Christ.

**ANCIENT CUSTOMS:** Formerly the celebration of Easter extended over the entire week in order to center the attention of the faithful on the divine mystery which was being commemorated. All servile work, except the most necessary tasks, was dispensed with; slaves were given their freedom, prisoners were pardoned and released; and the poor were fed from the bounty of the rich. Such foods as eggs, meat, and cheese were blessed as an act of gratitude to God for restoring to the faithful the "good things" of which they had deprived themselves during Lent. The newly baptized were shown special consideration and friendliness; wearing their baptismal robes, they attended Mass and other religious services each day.

**THE EASTER OCTAVE:** Each day of the octave has a special Mass and a Stational church which is still named in the Missal. These Masses were composed and the Stations chosen with a view to completing the instruction of the neophytes. Numerous allusions to the new converts are found in the proper or changeable parts of the Masses. In the Epistle of Saturday and the Introit of Low Sunday the Church compares them to "newborn babes" who drink the spiritual milk of the true doctrine of Christ. The octave ends with Low Sunday, so called because of the great contrast in the ordinary services and those of Easter. The older liturgical name is "Dominica in albis," literally, "Sunday in white." The neophytes had discarded their white garments on Saturday, but they wore them to Church on Sunday and formally exchanged them for their ordinary dress. These garments belonged to the Church and were, therefore, returned according to liturgical regulations.<sup>2</sup>

**GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY:** The second Sunday after Easter is called Good Shepherd Sunday because in the Gospel of the day, our Lord refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd. Some priests who engage in the outdoor

1. I Corinthians 15, 14.

2. Praying the Mass, Butler-Clendenin, p. 36.

apostolate, or "street preaching," begin their series of sermons on this Sunday, keeping in mind Christ's words: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: **them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.**"<sup>3</sup>

**ROGATION DAYS:** The fifth Sunday after Easter is called Rogation Sunday because it precedes the Rogation days or the Lesser Litanies, which occur on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday—that is, within the sixth week after Easter. Rogation means a petition or supplication. Rogation days were instituted by the Church to appease God's anger, to beg His protection, and to ask His blessing upon the fruits of the earth.

**ORIGIN OF THE LESSER LITANIES:** The Lesser Litanies originated in France during the fifth century when Bishop Mamertus of the Provence of Dauphiny, ordained that the people of his diocese should do penance for their sins and should hold processions on the three days preceding the feast of the Ascension in order to ask God to free them of certain calamities which were afflicting them. During these processions they chanted the beautiful, old liturgical prayer of the Church, the Litany of the Saints. God heard their petitions (rogations) and blessed them with health and abundant harvests. In time these prayer-processions were held in many places but they were not adopted into the Roman liturgy until about the ninth century.

**MASS FOR ROGATION DAYS:** The Rogation Mass stresses the efficacy of prayer. In his Epistle St. James points out that "the continual prayer of a just man availeth much"; while Christ says in the Gospel: "Ask, and it shall be given you." The penitential character of Rogation days is shown by the violet vestments, the unlighted paschal candle, and the absence of flowers on the altar.

**PUBLIC PROCESSIONS:** Formerly the procession was a part of the liturgical observance of the Rogation days, and in some places it is still customary for the clergy and the people to go to the fields and implore God's blessing upon the harvest. "Insofar as the public procession is concerned it has not been customary in this country to hold it on the Rogation Days themselves, but, in not a few rural parishes an outdoor procession is held on the Sunday preceding, a day that has recently come to be referred to as Rural Life Sunday."<sup>4</sup>

**THE GREATER LITANIES:** The feast of the Greater Litanies, which is celebrated on April 25, was introduced in Rome in the fourth century to supplant a festival to propitiate Robigus, an evil pagan deity who was believed to cause a blight or mildew on the corn. It consisted of a procession and the sacrifice of a ewe. The Christian procession seems to have followed along the same route as that taken by the pagans. The date was later appointed for the celebration of the feast of St. Mark, but the two solemnities have no connection.

**ASCENSION THURSDAY:** Rogation Wednesday is the vigil of the feast of the Ascension. The festival itself dates from the fourth century, but the vigil and the octave were established at later dates. The feast, which is a holyday of obligation, celebrates our Lord's ascension into heaven forty days after His resurrection. Although it is not definitely stated, it would appear from St. Luke's account in the Acts of the Apostles, that He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives where He began His passion on Holy Thursday. Only two of the evangelists, St. Mark and St. Luke, describe the ascension and then

3. John 10, 16.

4. The Church and Agriculture, Schmiedeler, Landward, (Summer) 1936, p. 9.

only briefly. The following is St. Luke's account: "And He led them (His disciples) out as far as Bethania: and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven. And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy." <sup>5</sup> During the Middle Ages a liturgical procession was held before the principal Mass in memory of the last time that our Lord walked upon the earth with His disciples.

**THE MASS:** The Epistle read in the Mass is from the Acts of the Apostles, and is one of the few instances in which the object of the feast is presented in the Epistle. The Gospel is taken from the Gospel according to St. Mark but the ascension is only briefly mentioned. After the Gospel the paschal candle, which for forty days has represented the presence of our Lord, is extinguished. It is not lighted again until the vigil of Pentecost when it is used in the blessing of the baptismal font.

**THOUGHTS ON THE ASCENSION:** We might be tempted to wonder why the disciples left the Mount of Olives and went back to Jerusalem "with great joy." But our Lord had blessed them and they remembered His promise that He would go to prepare a place for them. By faith and hope they could already associate themselves with Him in the mansions of their Father's house. The liturgy re-presents, for our joy and consolation, the ascension of our Lord, and gives us an opportunity to express our faith and our hope in the words of the Collect: "Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we who believe Thine only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, to have this day ascended into heaven, may also ourselves dwell in spirit amid heavenly things."

**PENTECOST:** Pentecost is, as its name indicates, the fiftieth day after Easter, and is in reality the "octave Sunday" of Easter. In the early centuries of Christianity, Easter and Pentecost, with the forty-eight days intervening, were celebrated as one festival. Considered in this light, "Pentecost is not primarily a feast in its own right, not a second great climax of the Paschal cycle, but rather a natural development of the Easter mystery and its ultimate flowering." <sup>6</sup>

**THE VIGIL:** Like Easter, the solemnity of Pentecost begins with a vigil. Formerly the catechumens who were not fully instructed at Easter, were baptized on the eve of the vigil of Pentecost. The font is blessed with the usual ceremonies, even to relighting the paschal candle and plunging it into the water. Whitsunday or White Sunday, as Pentecost is often called, comes from the baptismal garments which were worn by the neophytes. The Mass prayers relate to the mission of the Holy Spirit, with some reference to the newly baptized.

**THE MYSTERY OF PENTECOST:** Pentecost celebrates the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples. The Holy Spirit manifested Himself by a "mighty wind" which they heard and by "parted tongues as it were of fire" which they saw. Christ's work of redemption was completed with the descent of the Paraclete. Our Lord told His apostles: "But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." <sup>7</sup> He is the Spirit of Truth who would guide them and teach them and bring to their minds all the things which Christ had revealed by His words and miracles.

5. Luke 24, 50-52.

6. *Veni Sancte Spiritus, Orate Fratres*, May 16, 1936, p. 290.

7. John 16, 7.



**THE MASS:** The prayers of the Mass are joyful and exalted and replete with praise for the Holy Ghost. The Introit announces: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia." The Epistle relates the miraculous happening in the Cenacle and describes how the "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" heard of the "wonderful works of God," each in his own tongue; while the Gospel gives our Lord's words of assurance to the sorrowing apostles that He would send them the Comforter. The Sequence, "Veni Sancte Spiritus," "Come, Holy Ghost," is a sublime petition to the Holy Spirit to renew the hearts of the faithful and to enkindle in them the fire of divine love:

"O blessed Light of Life Thou art,  
Fill with Thy Light the inmost hearts  
Of those that hope in Thee."

"Pentecost is not merely an anniversary, it is also a life, the descent into our hearts of the Holy Ghost. And devotion to the Holy Ghost is the measure of our sanctity."<sup>8</sup> We may exercise this devotion by thanking God for the graces which we received in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and by cultivating the divine gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the God.

**THE OCTAVE:** The feast of Pentecost is followed by a privileged octave, each day of which has a special Mass and a Stational church. Similarly as in the Easter octave, the liturgy continues to address the "new born children" with instructions and warnings as in the Gospel for Tuesday when Christ admonishes them against false theories in the proverb of the sheepfold. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are the spring Ember days, and since they are older than the octave, they still retain their character of fast days, even though they occur in a season of joy. The Alleluia however, is not suppressed, and the liturgical color is red. With the end of the Saturday Mass, Paschaltide comes to a close.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**TIME AFTER PENTECOST:** The remainder of the liturgical year is called the **Time after Pentecost** and is the period between Trinity Sunday and the first Sunday of Advent. It may extend for twenty-three to twenty-eight weeks, depending on the date of Easter Sunday.

Since this liturgical division does not celebrate any particular mystery of our Lord's life, it has no consecutive historical grouping of Sundays; they are, therefore, designated merely as **Sundays after Pentecost**. The liturgy does, however, emphasize the reign of the Holy Ghost in the Church, so this designation carries out most admirably the idea of the prolongation of the paschal cycle.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITURGY:** The liturgy for the time after Pentecost was in the process of development through many hundreds of years, and not until after the seventh century did there seem to be any liturgical character attached to the season. During the Middle Ages, however, the Sundays were grouped after the feasts of Pentecost, SS. Peter and Paul, St. Lawrence, St. Cyprian, and St. Michael. It is well to remember that the historical sequence which now appears in the other parts of the ecclesiastical year is of comparatively recent origin.

8. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. 694.

Many attempts have been made to discover some unifying thought or systematic presentation in the liturgy for the Sundays after Pentecost, but the Church in her ancient and inspired wisdom sees fit to emphasize particular virtues and certain morals in order that her children may apply them to their own spiritual needs.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, each individual soul is being sanctified and renewed—made more Christ-like. Throughout the liturgy of the season, the Holy Ghost repeats in the words of the apostles and evangelists the truths and doctrines that Christ taught while He was upon earth, showing them in the new, clear light of the gifts of wisdom, understanding, and counsel.

**MIRACLES OF CHRIST:** Hence we find among the Gospels for the Sundays after Pentecost, the story of the miraculous draught of fishes, teaching confidence in God; the feeding of four thousand men with seven loaves of bread and a few little fishes, symbolizing and announcing the Holy Eucharist; the healing of the deaf and dumb man, illustrating the power and the mercy of God; and the curing of the ten lepers, pointing to the example of the one who returned to give thanks and was rewarded by Christ with the words: “. . . thy faith hath made thee whole.”<sup>9</sup>

**PARABLES OF OUR LORD:** A number of the parables related by our Lord to teach His doctrine, are subjects for the Gospels. Among them are: the parable of the supper, pointing to the Eucharistic banquet to which all men are invited, even sinners; the parable of the Good Shepherd, showing the compassion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the parable of the good and bad tree, warning against false prophets and erroneous doctrines; and the parable of the Good Samaritan, extolling the virtue of charity and love of one's neighbor. A study of the Gospels and Epistles for the twenty-eight Sundays will show that they contain the fundamental principles of all true Christian living, as exemplified by the words and deeds of Christ while He was upon earth.

**LITURGICAL COLOR OF THE SEASON:** The liturgical color of the season is green, a symbol of the hope which the Church extends to those who cooperate with the workings of the Holy Spirit and the confidence with which they may look forward to Christ's second advent on the day of judgment. The Gospel for the twenty-fourth and last Sunday after Pentecost is our Lord's own account of the Last Judgment.

**THREE GREAT FEASTS:** The season after Pentecost begins with the celebration of three great feasts whose dates are also regulated by Easter Sunday. They are the feast of the Blessed Trinity, which comes on the first Sunday after Pentecost; the feast of Corpus Christi, which occurs on the following Thursday; and the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated on the Friday immediately following the octave of Corpus Christi. The date of this last feast was designated by our Lord Himself in private revelations to St. Margaret Mary.

As we study the history of the founding of these feasts we discover a particular significance in both their order and grouping. The feasts themselves bring to our minds three great mysteries of our faith, namely: the dogma of the Holy Trinity; the real presence of the living body of Christ upon our altars; and the love of the Incarnate Word for us, as symbolized by His Sacred Heart.

9. Luke 17, 19.

**THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY:** The incomprehensible mystery of the Blessed Trinity is the dogma upon which the Christian religion is based. Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost form a brilliant trilogy of festivals which commemorate successively: (1) the work of the Father, Who sent His only begotten Son to us; (2) the work of the Son, Who redeemed us; and (3) the work of the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifies us. These three Persons of the Blessed Trinity constitute one God; it is eminently fitting, therefore, that after the work of salvation has been accomplished the liturgy should immediately honor them in a single festival.

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** The feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) dates from the thirteenth century. The institution of the Holy Eucharist was formerly commemorated only on Holy Thursday. Indeed, the day was, for a time, called the "Birthday of the Chalice." Since, however, the feast came during Holy Week, the remembrance of our Lord's passion, the consecration of the holy oils, and other services gradually drew the thoughts of the people away from the central theme around which the liturgy had been built.

Acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a humble religious, St. Juliana of Mont-Cornillon in Belgium, who was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1934, was instrumental in bringing about the establishment of a feast which would honor the Blessed Sacrament with all the pomp and magnificence which the Church has at her disposal. The Mass, which contains the sublime Sequence, "Lauda Sion"—"Praise thou, Sion, praise thy Savior," was composed by St. Thomas Aquinas. A procession with the Blessed Sacrament in which the faithful should, if possible, participate, is part of the liturgical observance of the feast. In some places the procession is held out of doors in the afternoon or in the evening. In the United States, by reason of an apostolic indult, the solemn celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi has been transferred to the following Sunday.

**THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART:** Another religious, St. Margaret Mary of Aloccoque, was chosen by our Lord to bring about the institution of a feast in honor of His Sacred Heart. Our Lord's most celebrated apparitions to the holy nun occurred in the year 1675. Almost another hundred years elapsed before it was extended to the universal Church. In 1925, Pope Pius XI approved a new Mass and office for the feast and gave it an octave.

The feasts of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart are essentially related in as much as the former venerates the living, glorified body of Christ dwelling in the tabernacles of the world, while the latter honors the mystery of "His love, which forced Him to put on a mortal body."<sup>10</sup>

**THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING:** Toward the end of the Dominical or Temporal cycle we have three other significant observances, which present "in one panorama the Feast of Christ the King, attended by All Saints and All Souls."<sup>11</sup>

The solemnity of the Kingship of Christ was instituted by Pope Pius XI in the Jubilee Year 1925. The reason why the Holy Father established this feast and ordained its celebration at the close of the cycle, is given in his own words taken from the Encyclical "Quas Primas": "The last Sunday of October, when the close of the liturgical year is at hand, seemed to Us a most fitting time to order this celebration for the reason that it will so happen that the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ commemorated during the year will then terminate and

10. Hymn at Matins.

11. Christian Life and Worship, Ellard, p. 87.

be crowned, as it were, by this great solemnity of Christ the King, thus exalting before all men the glory of Him who triumphs in His saints and in His elect." <sup>12</sup>

**THE OBJECT OF THE FEAST:** This special recognition of the Kingship of Christ and the annual celebration of His complete dominion over the Church and the whole world, aims to combat the modern spirit of anti-clericalism and secularism which refuses to acknowledge Christ and causes jealousies and strife among individuals, classes, and nations. Its object is to establish the "Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ."

**THE DIVINE TEACHER; THE SUPERNATURAL SCHOOL:** The Temporal cycle of the liturgical year presents the life of our Lord, the divine Teacher in "a supernatural school of piety, which the Church has opened to her children for the completion of their religious education according to a divine method, namely, that of making the activities of His disciples converge in the sacred person of Jesus Christ, and of copying His life, of expressing His virtues, participating for time and eternity in His salutary merits . . . By its means Jesus Christ continues down the centuries, by its means the holy image of Jesus Christ is carved in the souls of men." <sup>13</sup>

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. What mysteries in our Lord's life are celebrated during Eastertide? How much time is devoted to the celebration of each mystery?
2. What liturgical practices are peculiar to Eastertide?
3. How did the early Christians celebrate Easter week? Why were certain foods blessed? How did the newly baptized appear at liturgical functions during the week?
4. How does the liturgy for the Easter octave show the Church's solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the neophytes? What is the reason for the names "Low Sunday" and "Sunday in White"?
5. Read the Gospel from which Good Shepherd Sunday takes its name. What passage suggests the mission of the "outdoor apostolate"?
6. Why is the fifth Sunday after Easter called Rogation Sunday? Why were the Rogation days established?
7. Give the history of the origin of the Lesser Litanies.
8. How do the Epistle and Gospel for the Rogation Mass stress the efficacy of prayer? How is the penitential character of the season expressed?
9. Comment on the public procession and its observance in this country.
10. Why was the feast of the Greater Litanies introduced into the liturgy?
11. When was the feast of Ascension Thursday established? Give St. Luke's account of the ascension. How did the people of the Middle Ages commemorate Christ's journey to the place of His ascension?
12. Read the Epistle for the Mass of the Ascension and observe how it presents the object of the feast. Why is the paschal candle extinguished after the reading of the Gospel? When is it lighted again?

12. Encyclical "Quas Primas," Dec. 11, 1925.

13. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Caronti-Michel, p. 53.

13. Why did the disciples go back to Jerusalem in "great joy"?
14. How was Pentecost, the "octave Sunday" of Easter, celebrated in the early Church?
15. Mention some historical facts in regard to the vigil of Pentecost.
16. How did the Holy Ghost manifest Himself to the disciples on Pentecost? What did our Lord tell His disciples about the necessity of His leaving them?
17. How do the prayers of the Mass of Pentecost relate to the Holy Ghost? How may we exercise devotion to the Holy Ghost? Name the gifts of the Holy Ghost.
18. What liturgical themes characterize the privileged octave of Pentecost? What may be said about the spring Ember days that occur within the octave?

## PART II

19. What is the remainder of the liturgical year called? How many weeks may it include?
20. How are the Sundays of the period designated? What person of the Holy Trinity does the season honor?
21. What may be said about the historical development of the liturgy for the time after Pentecost?
22. What is the mind of the Church in regard to the liturgy of this period? How does the Church call attention to the teachings of Christ?
23. Name four of our Lord's miracles and the lessons which they emphasize, that form the subjects for Gospels read in the Sunday Masses. Read these Gospels from the Missal.
24. Mention four of Christ's parables which are related in the Gospels. Read these Gospels from the Missal and point out the lessons which they teach.
25. What is the symbolism of the liturgical color for the time after Pentecost?
26. What three great feasts, whose celebration is regulated by Easter, distinguish the season after Pentecost? What is the significance of their order and grouping? What great mysteries do they bring to mind?
27. Why is the feast of the Blessed Trinity so fittingly celebrated after the work of salvation has been accomplished?
28. Relate the history of the feast of Corpus Christi. What saint was instrumental in bringing about its establishment? What liturgical features are peculiar to this festival?
29. How was the feast of the Sacred Heart instituted? How is it related to the feast of Corpus Christi?
30. What three significant observances are celebrated towards the end of the Temporal cycle? Why did the Holy Father institute the feast of the Kingship of Christ? What is the object of the feast?
31. How should the liturgical year inspire the faithful?

## IX The Sanctoral Cycle

### PART I

A secondary cycle, running simultaneously with the Temporal cycle, honors the saints—the souls already enjoying the fruits of the redemptive mysteries. This cycle, which is composed of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the angels, and the saints, is known as the Sanctoral cycle or the proper of the saints. In celebrating the mysteries in the life of our Lord, the Church also remembers the saints who by their sufferings have shared in His redemptive work. The celebration of their feasts is, in reality, a supplement or an extension of the Temporal cycle.

**HONORING THE MARTYRS:** From the very first century of the Christian era it was customary in Rome for the faithful to remember the dead, especially the martyrs, with an annual observance in keeping with the funeral customs that prevailed at that time. Relatives and friends of the “faithful departed” gathered at their tombs to scatter flowers and to offer prayers, after which they all partook of a memorial feast. In time these private commemorations became public and liturgical in character, especially if the deceased were a celebrated martyr, and the holy Sacrifice was offered over the tomb itself. By the third century, local churches began to celebrate the “heavenly birthdays” of the martyrs of neighboring parishes, relics were exchanged, narratives of their lives were read, and gradually the Martyrology—the catalogue of the martyrs—and the Acts of Martyrs—the official records of their lives and the circumstances of their deaths—evolved into what is today called the “calendar of the saints.”

**RELICS IN ALTARS:** The canonical precept which provides that relics of the saints be placed in altars and altar stones,<sup>1</sup> came from the custom of celebrating Mass over the graves of the martyrs. One of the first acts of the celebrant as he begins the Mass is to kiss the altar in which these relics are entombed and to recite the following prayer: “We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints, whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen.” Thus the liturgy presents the saints in their true relation to us—as meditators and advocates—and encourages us by every possible means to avail ourselves of their powerful intercession before the court of heaven. No greater honor can be given to the saints than that which is accorded them in the celebration of the Mass in which they are often called by name, their virtues extolled, and their help and prayers invoked.

**ORDER OF FEASTS:** The order which is observed in the celebration of the feasts of the saints has been clearly defined by Pope Pius X in a bull entitled “Divino Afflatu.” The Blessed Virgin Mary, the queen of all the saints, is given the first place of honor; then come the holy angels. St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, SS. Peter and Paul, the other apostles and the evangelists take rank respectively, according to their share in the divine plan of the incarnation of our Lord.

National saints, patrons of dioceses and parish churches, follow in order; next come the feasts of the dedication of churches, martyrs, confessors, pontiffs, doctors, confessors not pontiffs, abbots, virgins, and holy women not virgins.

1. Altar and Sanctuary, Clendenin, pp. 14-16.

**DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS:** The Church venerates the saints and celebrates their feasts in order to honor God through them, and to encourage her members to implore their help and to imitate their virtues and example. That the assistance of the saints may be asked with confidence is evidenced by the Postcommunion prayer in the Mass of the feasts of All Saints: "Grant we beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thy faithful people may always rejoice in paying reverence to all Thy saints, and may they be helped by their unceasing prayers."

**LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN:** Just as the life of our Lord is re-enacted in the Temporal cycle of the liturgical year, the events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary are presented in the Sanctoral cycle. "Like Christ, the Virgin presides over the whole work of creation, for having been chosen of all eternity to give us the Savior, it is she, with her Son, whom God had chiefly in view when He created the world."<sup>2</sup>

**FEASTS OF MARY:** The Masses for the feasts of the Blessed Virgin—the "Mary Masses,"<sup>3</sup> as Father Martindale calls them in his "The Mind of the Missal,"—reflect the principal acts that made up the miraculous drama of the life of the Mother of God.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, celebrates her own stainless conception and her victory over Satan. The Nativity of Mary, September 8, honors her birthday, while the feast of the Name of Mary, which follows on September 12, venerates the name by which, according to her own words, all generations should hail her and call her blessed. According to a pious tradition, Mary was presented in the Temple when she was three years old and remained there during her girlhood. The feast of the Presentation, November 15, recalls this period of her life.

The Annunciation, March 25, celebrates the greatest event in the history of the world, the incarnation of our Lord in the womb of the Virgin Mary as announced by the Angel Gabriel. The angel told her, too, that her cousin Elizabeth would soon give birth to a son. Mary hastened immediately to felicitate her kinswoman and it is this visit and the wonderful events attending it that are solemnized on the feast of the Visitation, July 2.

**SORROW AND JOY:** Two feasts, one of which occurs on the Friday of Passion week and the other on September 15, compassionate the Blessed Mother on her seven principal sorrows; but the feast of the Assumption invites the faithful in the words of the Introit of the Mass to "rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a festival-day in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whose assumption the angels rejoice, and give praise to the Son of God." The Assumption, August 15, is probably the earliest feast of the Blessed Virgin and was celebrated in memory of her "heavenly birthday," the day on which she entered into the eternal joys of heaven. The idea of commemorating the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven seems to have been a later development or amplification.

**OTHER MARIAN FEASTS:** The Church calendar contains many other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, among them the feast of the Holy Rosary, October 7; the feast of the Miraculous Medal, November 27; and the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, July 16; all of which are connected with objects used in her particular devotions. Three other festivals honor her miraculous pictures: Our Lady of Good Counsel, April 26; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, June 27; and Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12 or November 16.

2. St. Andrew Daily Missal, p. 1435.

3. The Mind of the Missal, Martindale, pp. 219-233.

**THE FEASTS OF THE ANGELS:** After the Mother of God, the liturgy pays honor to the holy angels since they are God's messengers and ministering spirits. It is generally believed that countries, cities, churches, religious orders, and families have their respective guardian angels. There can be no doubt, however, that each person on earth is protected by an angel who always sees the face of God. The Epistle for the feast of the Guardian Angels, October 2, taken from the Book of Exodus, reveals God's promise to the Hebrews: "Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared."<sup>4</sup> The Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael have feasts dedicated to their honor.

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST:** The liturgy exalts St. John the Baptist above all other saints because next to Christ's holy Mother, he was destined to participate most intimately in the mystery of the redemption. We are familiar with the prodigies that took place at his birth, we know of his austere life, his fearless preaching and exhortations to penance, his defense of Christ, his imprisonment, and his martyrdom. The Church honors him in two of her feasts—his Nativity, June 24, and his Beheading, August 29. His name is inscribed in the Canon of the Mass, and his aid is invoked in the Confiteor and the Litany of the Saints.

**ST. JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH:** St. Joseph, the spouse of our Lady, the foster-father of the Child Jesus, and the protector of the Holy Family, is always honored with Jesus and Mary, especially at Christmas. The Gospel for his feast day, March 19, is the same as that read on the vigil of Christmas. In 1870 Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph "Protector of the Universal Church," and it is under this title that he is venerated on the feast of his Solemnity which occurs on the Wednesday following the second Sunday after Easter.

**SAINTS PETER AND PAUL:** The liturgy unites the names of SS. Peter and Paul as inseparably as if they were brothers, because they are the foundations upon which the Church is built—St. Peter being the "rock," and St. Paul the "power" of the word of God.

The Roman Martyrology gives the following introduction to their feast, June 29: "At Rome the birthday of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, who suffered death under the Emperor Nero. The first was fixed to the cross with his head downwards, was buried on the Vatican (hill), and is venerated over all the earth; the second was beheaded, was buried along the road leading to Ostia, and received the same honors." St. Peter is given precedence in the liturgy for the day, but St. Paul is assigned a commemorative Mass on the day following, June 30. Other feasts venerate the Chains of St. Peter, his Chair at Antioch, and his Chair at Rome, while the conversion of St. Paul is the object of another beautiful Mass in his honor. The feast of the Dedication of their Basilicas is celebrated November 18.

**FEASTS OF THE OTHER APOSTLES AND THE EVANGELISTS:** Space does not permit a comment on the feasts of the other apostles. St. Paul's advice to the Hebrews: "Remember your prelates who have spoken the word of God to you;"<sup>5</sup> found a tender response in the hearts of the early Christians. They had a profound enthusiasm for the memory of the apostles; a like devotion characterizes the liturgy today. The names of the apostles are inscribed

4. Exodus, 23, 20.

5. Hebrews, 13, 7.



in the Canon of the Mass,<sup>6</sup> while the Preface for their feasts calls them “shepherds and vicars,” and asks God to keep a continual watch over the Church through the “blessed apostles.” The evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, are the authors of the Gospel narratives which bear their names. Each of the evangelists has a special feast and a proper Mass. St. Luke and St. Mark were not apostles but only disciples of our Lord.

**NATIONAL SAINTS AND PATRONS:** Because special gratitude is due to national saints and the patrons of dioceses and parishes, the Church ordains that such feasts shall be celebrated with particular solemnity.

The national saints or patrons of the countries of North America are: Canada, St. Anne; United States, the Immaculate Conception; and Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe. St. Rose of Lima is honored as the patron saint of South America.

There is a distinction made between a patron of a diocese, city or town, and a titular or title of a church. A patron is a divine Person, or a saint who is chosen as a special advocate with God—a choice which must be confirmed by the Holy See. A titular is a divine Person, a mystery, a sacred object, or a saint in whose name a church is blessed or consecrated. If a titular is a saint, he is often called a patron.

(Discussion outline at the end of the Chapter.)

## PART II

**FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH:** The dedication of a church and its anniversary are primarily feasts of our Lord, since the Church can truly be said to be the dwelling place of God. The Introit of the Mass of the feast reads: “Terrible is this place: it is the house of God, and the gate of heaven; and it shall be called the court of God.” The rubrics direct that on the feast of the dedication of a church twelve wax candles shall burn before the crosses painted on the walls of the consecrated church for the “whole and entire day.”

**FEASTS OF THE OTHER SAINTS:** The feasts of the saints differ in rank, since the saints themselves did not all attain to the same degree of sanctity. They served God according to their callings and various states in life. The remaining feasts which we shall consider are grouped under the following general headings: martyrs, confessors, virgins and other holy women.

**THE MARTYRS:** Martyrdom is the “. . . voluntary endurance of death for the Catholic faith, or for any article thereof, or for the preservation of some Christian virtue, or for some other act of virtue relating to God. To be a martyr one must actually be put to death or die as a direct result of one’s sufferings.”<sup>7</sup> From this definition we can readily understand why the Church honors the martyrs as her heroes and why she venerates them above all other saints in this last classification. She honors the martyrs for the further reason that through their passion they have shared most closely in the passion and death of Christ.

**CONFESSORS:** A confessor is a canonized male saint who was not a martyr. The liturgy divides the confessors into those who were pontiffs, doctors, non-pontiffs, and abbots. In any case the word indicates a person who professed or confessed Christ in a public manner by his life and his doctrine. The

6. Praying the Mass, Butler-Clendenin, pp. 47, 54.

7. The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary, Attwater, p. 328.

greatest and most illustrious confessor is St. Joseph. St. Martin of Tours (d. 397), whose feast is celebrated Nov. 11, was the first confessor to be honored by the Western Church.

**PONTIFFS:** The name pontiff may be applied to any bishop; supreme or sovereign pontiff, however, refers to a pope. The literal English rendering of the Latin word "pontifex" is "bridge-builder." The name pontiff, when given to the Vicar of Christ, signifies a bridge-builder between God and men, a title which carries with it the central idea of the papacy and its sacred functions. Non-pontiff designates a confessor who was not a bishop. The title confessor-abbot refers to a saint who was superior of a community of men consecrated to God by the religious vows, and dwelling in a monastic institution.

**DOCTORS:** The doctors of the Church are certain ecclesiastical writers who, on account of their piety and learning and the great advantages which the Church has gained from their doctrine, have received the title of doctors of the Church. They are the authorized interpreters of the word of God. In the Western Church St. Gregory the Great, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome were the chief defenders of the faith during the era of the Fathers of the Church, and are known as the great Latin doctors. In the Eastern Church St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Athanasius were pre-eminent during that period; they are called the four Greek doctors.

There are at the present time twenty-six doctors of the Church, each of whom is honored by a feast in the sanctoral cycle. St. Albert the Great, bishop and confessor, was canonized and proclaimed a doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI in 1931. His feast is celebrated November 15.

**VIRGINS AND OTHER HOLY WOMEN:** Women who have achieved sainthood are honored either as virgins, or as holy women, not virgins. Such a distinction is necessary because the Church, following the teachings and example of Christ Himself, maintains that virginity which is suggested by virtuous motives, is to be preferred in itself to the married state. Holy women, not virgins, are saints who were married, or who were widows or penitents. There is a further liturgical division which includes virgin martyrs and holy women martyrs.

In the Canon of the Mass the Church remembers Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia, all early virgin martyrs. Such holy matrons as Anne, Monica, Helena, Frances of Rome, Jane Frances de Chantal, Margaret of Scotland, Elizabeth of Hungary, and Rita of Cascia proved by their lives that they could practice the great Christian virtues without giving up or neglecting their household duties. They were like the "valiant woman" spoken of in the Epistle in the common of the Mass for holy women, who ". . . opened her hand to the needy and stretched out her hands to the poor."

St. Francis of Rome, one of the greatest mystics of the fifteenth century, is said to have declared: "A married woman must sometimes leave her God at the altar to find Him in her domestic cares." The lives of "holy women not virgins and not martyrs" were characterized by the performance of acts of charity, the charity that ministered to the spiritual necessities as well as to the temporal needs of their neighbors. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy sanctified their souls and ordered their days and they were blessed by all those who received their bounty.

**THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS:** Since it is not possible to commemorate every saint individually, even if their names were known, the Church has insti-

tuted the solemn feast of All Saints, November 1, as a festival day in honor of all the saints. It is one of the six holydays of obligation observed in the United States. The Lesson chosen for the Mass of the day is from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle. It shows us a wonderful vision of heaven in the "twelve thousand signed"—twelve being considered the perfect number—of each tribe of Israel, and of a great multitude which no one can count, who are standing before the throne of the Lamb, clothed in white garments and holding palms in their hands. The Gospel, which is taken from the Sermon on the Mount enumerates the Eight Beatitudes, which indicate the way of life by which they gained sainthood.

**THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL SOULS:** The Church, like a tender mother, does not forget the souls who are still detained in purgatory and who will one day enter heaven. Having celebrated most gloriously the memory of the Church Triumphant, she bids the Church Militant to pray for the Church Suffering, who, as the Council of Trent clearly states, are helped by the suffrages (recommendations) of the faithful and especially by the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Pope Benedict XV on August 10, 1915, gave permission for every priest to celebrate holy Mass three times on All Souls day. This was during the period of the World War and the Holy Father, deeply moved by the great number of men who were dying on the battlefields, granted this privilege to the priests throughout the world. Formerly only the clergy of Spain and Portugal and the Spanish parts of South America enjoyed this prerogative.

**"TOTIES QUOTIES" INDULGENCE:** Another means of helping the poor souls is the "toties quoties" (so often as) indulgence, which may be gained by receiving the sacraments and visiting a church or proper chapel and praying for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff. This plenary indulgence, applicable to the souls in purgatory, may be gained at each visit which is made from noon of November 1 to midnight of November 2.

It is usually customary for pastors to arrange for special services to be held in the cemeteries during which prayers are offered for the repose of the souls of those who are buried there. If the weather permits, the service is conducted on the first Sunday after the commemoration of All Souls if it cannot be arranged for the day itself.

**THE MISSAL AND THE BREVIARY:** One of the objects of the liturgical movement is to encourage the laity to become more familiar with the Mass liturgy through an intelligent use of the Missal. It is hoped that these lessons on the liturgical year may be a means of bringing this inspiring Mass book to the attention of many devout men and women to whom its treasures have heretofore been unknown. In some parishes certain members of the laity have advanced a step farther and are participating in the liturgical life of the Church to the extent of reading portions of the divine office every day. This edifying practice on the part of individuals had led to the organization of the **League of the Divine Office**, a simple, informal association with no central administrative functions beyond those of encouragement and information.

**THE LEAGUE OF THE DIVINE OFFICE:** This league <sup>8</sup> is made up of local chapters or units, each chapter consisting of seven persons who band themselves together for the purpose of reading the day Hours of the breviary—Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. Matins, which is called the night office, is not included in this plan for the layfolk. At the beginning of

8. *Orate Fratres*, Feb. 22, 1936, p. 177.

each week one of the day hours is assigned to each member of the chapter for daily recitation. By this arrangement, the chapter as a whole recites the entire day office each day, and in the course of seven weeks, each member of the chapter will have recited in turn all of the day Hours. An English translation of the day Hours, adapted for the use of the laity is now available. "The Breviary for the Laity,"<sup>9</sup> an exposition of the structure and spiritual values of the divine office, has recently been translated from the French. This booklet will be of great assistance to the members of the league who wish to recite the divine office in a manner worthy of its high dignity.

**LITURGICAL PRAYER:** Every time that we associate ourselves with the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the solemnities of the cycles and feasts of the liturgical year, the divine office, or any liturgical function, we are, in union with the other members of the Mystical Body, taking part in the worship and adoration which Christ our Head is ceaselessly rendering to God. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but with Jesus, our Brother and our Redeemer, we seek and find admittance into the company and fellowship of the saints.

## DISCUSSION OUTLINE

### PART I

1. What is the Sanctoral cycle? Why is the Sanctoral cycle considered to be an extension of the Temporal cycle? How was the memory of the martyrs honored during the first three centuries of the Christian era?
  2. How does the Church honor the saints in the celebration of the Mass, especially those whose relics are entombed in the altar stones? Why are the saints called our mediators or advocates?
  3. What order is observed in the celebration of the feasts of the Sanctoral cycle?
  4. Why does the Church honor the saints? How is the life of the Blessed Virgin presented in various feasts of the Sanctoral cycle?
  5. Mention the feasts which commemorate events in our Lady's life up to and including the feast of the Visitation.
  6. Comment on the feasts of the Seven Sorrows and the feast of the Assumption.
  7. Name six Marian feasts that are connected with objects of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.
  8. Explain the teaching of the Church in regard to the angels, and the honor which she gives to them.
  9. Why does the liturgy exalt St. John the Baptist next to Christ's holy Mother?
  10. How does the Church honor St. Joseph as the foster-father of Jesus and as the Protector of the Universal Church?
  11. Why and how does the liturgy unite the names of SS. Peter and Paul? Mention their feasts.
  12. Comment on the honor which the Church gives to the other apostles and to the evangelists.
  13. Why does the Church encourage devotion to national saints and patrons? Name the national patrons of the countries of North America. Who is the patron of South America? What is a patron? a titular?
9. An English translation of the "Day Hours" and "The Breviary for the Laity" may be procured through the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn.

## PART II

14. How is our Lord honored on the feast of the Dedication of a Church? Under what general headings are other feasts of the saints grouped?
15. Give the definition of the word martyrdom. Why does the Church honor the martyrs? What is a confessor? Into what four classifications are the confessor saints divided? Name two illustrious confessors.
16. What is a pontiff? a supreme pontiff? a non-pontiff? an abbot? What does the word "pontifex" mean?
17. Why are certain saints called doctors of the Church? Name the four great doctors of the Western Church, and those of the Eastern Church. How many saints have been so honored?
18. Why does the liturgy make the distinction between holy women who were virgins and those who were not virgins?
19. What virgin martyrs are honored in the Canon of the Mass? Name some holy matrons who have become saints.
20. What well known saying is attributed to St. Frances of Rome? How did many holy matrons sanctify their lives?
21. Comment on the feast of All Saints. Read the Gospel for the feast of All Saints.
22. How does the Church remember the holy souls detained in purgatory? When was the privilege of celebrating holy Mass three times on All Souls Day extended to every priest in the world?
23. What is the "toties quoties" indulgence and under what conditions may it be gained?
24. Read and discuss the paragraph entitled "The Missal and the Breviary."
25. What is the League of the Divine Office and how does it function?
26. How may we associate ourselves with God in the liturgy?

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