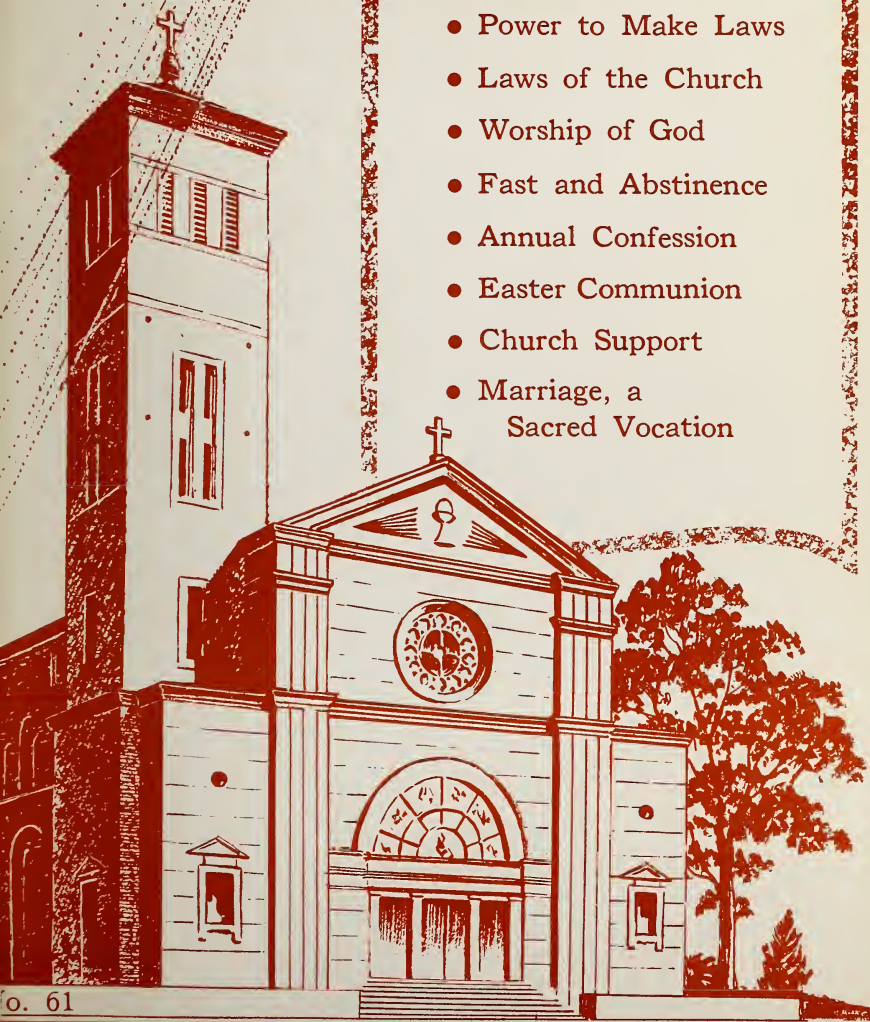


the PRECEPTS of the CHURCH

- Power to Make Laws
- Laws of the Church
- Worship of God
- Fast and Abstinence
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.. the *GOD-GIVEN* laws

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Why the Knights of Columbus Advertise Catholic Faith

The reason is simple. We Catholics want our non-Catholic friends and neighbors to know us as we really are and not as we are some times mistakenly represented.

We are confident that when our religious Faith is better understood by those who do not share it, mutual understanding will promote the good-will which is so necessary in a predominantly Christian country whose government is designed to serve all the people—no matter how much their religious convictions may differ.

American Catholics are convinced that as the teachings of Christ widely and firmly take hold of the hearts and conduct of our people, we shall remain free in the sense that Christ promised (John VIII, 31-38), and in the manner planned by the Founding Fathers of this republic.

Despite the plainly stated will of the Good Shepherd that there be "one fold and one shepherd," the differences in the understanding of Christ's teaching are plainly evident. It has rightfully been called "the scandal of a divided Christianity."

If there is anything which will gather together the scattered flock of Christ, it is the nationwide understanding of the Savior, what He did and how He intended mankind to benefit by the Redemption.

To this end, we wish our fellow-Americans to become acquainted with the teachings of Christ as the Catholic Church has faithfully presented them, since the day the apostles invaded the nations of the world in willing and courageous obedience to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. XXVIII, 19).

**SUPREME COUNCIL
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
Religious Information Bureau
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Power to Make LAWS

"Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God" (Romans 13:1). All authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, has for its final sanction the divine law. All authority of Church and State ultimately comes from God. And, as everyone knows, if any law given by Church or State is to be true and just, it must conform with the mind of God. These are the two perfect societies which exist in this world: the civil society, which goes by the name of the State, whether it be a nation or a sovereign federated community, and the Catholic Church.

In the words of Pope Leo XIII, "The Almighty, therefore, has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, the other over human things. Each in its kind is supreme, each has fixed limits within which it is contained, limits which are defined by the nature and special object of the province of each, so that there is, we may say, an orbit traced out within which the action of each is brought into play by its own native right" (From the famed



Encyclical, *Immortale Dei*).

These two societies exist for different purposes. The Church exists for man's sanctification and eternal happiness. "Whatever, therefore, in human things is of a sacred character, whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God, is subject to the power and judgment of the Church. Whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order is rightly subject to the civil authority. Jesus Christ has Himself given command that what is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar, and that what belongs to God is to be rendered to God" (Encyclical, *Immortale Dei*).

The goal of the State is to make it possible for men to live together in this life, to protect them in their lives and property, to smooth out conflicts of interest, to judge disputes, to advance prosperity and public morality, to safeguard its people's position among the nations. All this is what we call the temporal welfare of man, because it begins and ends with time, with this life. To ensure the temporal welfare of

men the State exists. For this it must make laws.

What, then, is law? A law is a reasonable ordering of things for the general good, made by the supreme authority in a sovereign community. In the past this supreme authority was a monarch; now it is commonly, at least in theory, a legislative assembly. But it is well to bear in mind the idea of a monarch, for the One Who gives the first and most essential laws, on which all others rest, is a Monarch—God.

God in creating must intend order in what He creates, and thereby He becomes the author of the natural law. This natural law can be determined simply by examining things as they are, just as we can determine the order an automobile designer imposes on his product by examining the machine.

God Will Judge

Paul in his Epistle to the Romans points out that the Gentiles could have known God by the light of natural reason (Romans 1:18-23). Furthermore, Paul says, "When the Gentiles who have no law do by nature what the Law prescribes, these having no law are a law unto themselves. They show the work of the Law written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness to them, even when conflicting thoughts accuse or defend them. This will take place on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the hidden secrets of men through Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:14-16). The Gentiles will be judged by God according to the natural law: for the Gentiles or nations who

sinned apart from the written Law of Moses shall perish or be judged by the natural law, written on every man's heart.

Thus, simply stated, a natural moral law is one that is evident in the nature of man, and evident to his own reason and understanding. Examples of such natural moral laws are the basic commands: adore God only; honor your father and mother; you shall not kill; you shall not misuse the faculty of generation; you shall not steal; you shall not lie. All these laws, and the primary conclusions that can be drawn from them, are written into man's nature in such a way that so long as he possesses human nature he is bound by these laws.

Of course God did more than write these laws into man's nature. He also put them into words and into positive teaching, as through the commandments He gave to Moses for the Chosen People, and through the frequent repetitions of natural laws that came from the lips of Christ. Over such laws the Catholic Church has no authority other than that of manifesting how clearly they stand out in human nature and repeating them to the end of time.

The Divine Law

When God speaks directly to mankind through revelation and thus makes known His will, He becomes the author of the divine positive law, that could not necessarily be determined simply by reason. An example is the law that Baptism is necessary in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. A positive law is always one that you have to be

told about to know, while a natural law is one that you could learn about by using your reason. Christ told us many things that we must do for our salvation that we could never have learned except through His words. The Catholic Church never has changed, does not assume that she can change, and never will change the positive divine laws laid on mankind by Jesus Christ.

The thought bears repeating that since it is of the essence of law to be reasonable and productive of order, it follows that no law made by man can be really law unless it corresponds to the will of God, Who is Supreme Governor and Orderer.

Generally there is no difficulty in distinguishing laws from other rules for the guidance of life. Laws are distinguished from mere precepts chiefly by two things: they are made for a sovereign community, and in themselves laws are permanent or stable. They last beyond the authority of the lawgiver, at least until such time as lawful authority sees fit to repeal them.

We do not call the commands of a parent laws, though they are certainly binding in conscience. Nor do we call laws the directives of a business executive or the constitutions of a particular organization. We do not normally call law even the enactments of a municipality. The reason is that these entities, though they have power to command, are not sovereign communities, governing all the people.

Hence to make laws is the same as to be a perfect society. The State is a perfect society because it is complete for its own purposes and self-

sufficient. For everything that has to do with directing people in reference to their interests here and now, the State is the supreme authority and for that purpose it is sovereign.

When we speak of the State as concerned with the here and now, we do not mean to say that it has no interest in furthering man's higher destinies. The State, being an outgrowth of man, is, like man, a creature of God and owes Him homage and obedience, and the State is bound to do all in its province that will help man along his road to the other life. The State is bound to protect the whole man, and therefore it must uphold public morality and put no blocks to man's spiritual pursuit, not precisely in order to get man to heaven, but for its own welfare; for the State cannot flourish unless it has the protection of God and the support of citizens of moral fiber. But its laws are never directed to the other world, in and for itself.

Authority of Church

This purpose of advancing man's spiritual welfare is the business of the Church. The preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the celebration of divine worship, the final judgment with respect to the morality of human acts are within the legitimate province of the Church. Besides these spiritual functions, there are other matters, in themselves temporal but consecrated to God by reason of the uses to which they are put, which are subject to ecclesiastical authority. For example, Church buildings and all articles are set apart for divine worship, as well as the sources of

income appropriated to the upkeep of God's ministers.

In actual practice the division between the respective provinces of Church and State is not absolute and clear-cut; there is a "mixed" category, pertaining to the Church from one point of view, to the State from another. The marriage contract and education are conspicuous examples of this. Marriage is a sacrament, and as such pertains exclusively to Christ's Church; but it is also a social contract, and under this aspect the State rightly takes cognizance of it. Education, fostering as it does the growth and development of a free individual human person, potentially or actually a member of Christ's Mystical Body, must always be among the chief preoccupations of the Church. But the State, responsible in large measure for the welfare of its future citizens, may also legislate within the sphere of education, provided that in doing so it does not override, but rather respects and reinforces the freedom and spiritual interest of those chiefly concerned.

Church and State

The Church, being a perfect society, and hence having the right to make true laws, might be expected to bear some analogy to the State. In truth, anyone who takes a first glance at the organization of the Catholic Church will note some resemblances to a state—some of them, indeed, consciously copied from the civil sphere. Her dioceses and other jurisdictions were imitations of old Roman provinces. Much in her canon law was modeled after or suggested by the civil law in various

ages. And in fact some civil laws, like that making legal adoption an impediment to matrimony, have been "canonized" or taken over bodily by the Church as her law for the region in which the civil law is in force.

The Church, naturally, depends on the State for making tolerable the conditions of her existence. But the Church does not depend on the State in any other way. Laws that reach far deeper into a man's life than civil laws ordinarily go, laws such as that commanding celibacy for the clergy and those declaring the conditions under which marriage is valid, laws commanding the specific confession of sins or regulating the amount and kind of food that may be taken on certain days—all these are generally observed with a far greater sense of obligation than are the most stringently sanctioned civil statutes. Obviously, the Church would have long since had to give up making laws if her members did not realize that she is a perfect society which is sovereign in the spiritual sphere.

Now how did the Catholic Church come to have this peculiar position? This Spiritual Kingdom had its forerunner in a Kingdom both spiritual and temporal, known as the carnal Israel. Moses became the first lawgiver of that Kingdom when he was commanded by God to enact laws minutely regulating the life of the Chosen People. The carnal Israel continued until the time of Christ—down those centuries when the spiritual and temporal interests of the Jewish people were fused together in one theocratic state, which served both as Church and as State.

The coming of Christ brought

into the world a division between religion and the State that had existed nowhere before. Christ made it known that He had come to establish a "kingdom"; but it was not to be a continuation of the carnal Israel. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It was to be a kingdom in the realm of the spiritual life. Christ had often described to the people the nature of this kingdom—in this world, but not of it. And He had taken the steps to provide those who would represent Him in His absence, when He had returned to the Father. In no case did He surrender to them His supreme right of kingship as the Son of God. But He did choose men to whom He gave the power to rule in the kingdom—under Him and with the authority He would give and within the limits He would set.

In the Church, all would be subject to the one who in his own person would be the visible representative of Christ on earth—Peter and his successors. To Peter, He said: "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The power of binding and loosing was the power to impose an obligation or to remove it; it is the power of making laws for the whole Church and of imposing special obligations on single individuals. That this is a power coming from God and leading to God is clear from the fact that God Himself promised to back the decisions of Peter and his successors by His divine confirmation.

The "keys" were the symbol of authority over a household or a kingdom. Hence when Christ promised Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, He promised to make the Apostle His administrator or His visible representative in governing the power to make official decisions regarding faith and morals—for this the kingdom. This promise entailed is the purpose of the Church which is in this world but not of it. Hence to Peter, as chief of the Apostles, were given the powers to make laws, to enforce these laws, and to judge in disputes.

Power Is Delegated

Christ later promised to the group of the Apostles the power of binding and loosing which He had first promised in a most special way to Simon Peter (Matthew 18:18). He fulfilled this promise shortly before His Ascension into heaven, when He told them: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

In other words, the power that the Son of God Himself had over the souls of men He transmitted to the twelve whom He had chosen to extend His kingdom. They were to have a share of His authority until the end of time. This meant, naturally, that they were to communicate

that authority to successors.

That the Apostles actually exercised this power, and transferred it to others even in their lifetime, can be seen from any reading of the Acts or Epistles. At the first Church council on record, held in Jerusalem about 50 A.D., the great question was decided whether or not a Christian had to retain Jewish practices in order to be a Christian: "The Holy Spirit and we," the council answered, "have decided to lay no further burden upon you but this indispensable one, that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from immorality..." (Acts 15:28-29).

"Ruled the Unruly"

The council of the Apostles thus could impose burdens, and remove them. In other words, they had the right to make true laws in order to direct the Christian people to salvation. Their power was not confined simply to reaffirming or interpreting the laws God had given directly.

Again, we read in 1 and 2 Corinthians that Paul ruled the unruly Christian community of Corinth with a firm hand and threatened its disobedient members with the rod of authority (1 Corinthians 4:21). This authority with which he was invested, he transferred to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:17-20) and Titus, whom Paul exhorts to "speak and exhort and rebuke, with all authority" (Titus 2:15). These men were Bishops, who had the Apostles' own authority to rule the Church and make laws for her. They in turn

were to consecrate other Bishops, with similar lawmaking authority, and there were to be successors of Peter who were to rule the entire Church as he had ruled the Church of the Apostles. The primitive Church was a lawmaking Church, as is the Catholic Church today.

The Church Christ founded was therefore given the power to make laws, and she actually exercised that power. The reason why she used that power then, as she uses it now, is obvious from the nature of the Church, which must do for its members all that is necessary for the end for which they are members.

The laws of the kingdom of Christ are made by the authority which Christ gave to His Church. They are not mere human inventions intended to supplant the law of God. They are made to point out the means in the succeeding ages of Christianity by which the members of the Church can best observe these laws of God Himself. They are not to turn men away from God, but to turn men to Him. Their effect is to make the whole Christian community strive together in harmony for the final end of the kingdom of Jesus. They produce in men those dispositions by which each man helps himself. And besides helping himself, through his prayers, his reverence for sacred things, his acceptance of the guidance and the means of holiness in the kingdom, each man draws down greater blessings of God upon all the members of the Church and helps others toward the final goal of salvation.

LAWS of the Church



"He therefore said to them again, 'Peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you'" (John 20:21). When Christ gave authority to His Church, He certainly gave her the right to make whatever laws would be necessary at any given time to fulfill her mission of glorifying God and leading men to salvation. All such laws, based on special circumstances and needs, are positive ecclesiastical laws. Though they may bind the faithful under pain of excommunication or of mortal or venial sins, they can be lifted, altered, or abrogated by the same authority that made them.

No person should be in the least disturbed by the fact that the Catholic Church sometimes changes the laws she is competent to make. It must be remembered that the law-making authority of the Church never embraces natural moral laws and positive divine laws. The Church can call to mind those things that are already prescribed by the divine law, natural or positive; and, although she cannot dispense in these laws, she can interpret them authoritatively.

In our day, when the notion of

natural and divine law has become dim and confused in the minds of so many; when written man-made law is made to stand for all law, it is difficult for some people to realize that there are many laws that the Church upholds but which she did not make and cannot alter, and which are not, in the strict sense, Church laws at all.

Often mistakenly considered Church laws, because the Church is the only considerable force that now defends them, are such laws as those forbidding contraception, and attempted remarriage when already validly married. Actually, these are divine laws and would be in force even if the Church did not exist. The divine natural law forbidding the direct and deliberate frustration of the God-given faculty of procreation exists because order could not be maintained in creation if it were not in force. God must sanction order and condemn disorder or cease to be God. He could no more permit sex-perversions, which involve misuse of the faculty of generation and are intrinsically immoral, than He could command a lie, which is a perversion of the gift of speech.

Hence it is idle to look for a time when the Church first condemned contraception, or consider whether the documents in which it is condemned are infallible, or wonder whether the Church at some future time will modify her position on this immoral practice. The law always existed and always will exist. The Church must uphold it because she is the agent of God's will. But she did not make it. The birth controller's quarrel is not with the Church but with his own Creator, the author of human nature.

The Church has authority to determine those things that were left undetermined in the divine law, as for example the manner in which the Lord's Day is to be sanctified, the times and frequency with which the divine law of communion is to be fulfilled, the way in which the obligation of fasting is to be complied with, etc. Moreover, the Church can make laws in matters that were left free by our Lord whenever this will promote the better observance of His law, as for example laws regulating clerical life, laws for the administration of the Church, laws for the conduct of worship.

"Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The Church has power not only to make laws, but also authority to change or repeal laws she has herself made. Some laws the Church has made will probably never change. An example of such a law is the one whereby all who aspire to and are accepted for the priesthood in the western rite

take a vow of celibacy before their ordination. That this is a Church law and not a direct command of Christ is clear from the fact that in the first two centuries of Christianity the clergy were not required to be celibate and nowhere in the Bible is it stated that they are. Yet celibacy was so highly praised both by Christ and St. Paul and proved to be so great a help to the holiness and fruitfulness of priests, that it is very doubtful this particular law will ever be changed.

Church Laws Change

There are many examples of purely positive ecclesiastical laws that have undergone changes throughout the years of the existence of the Church. There have been, for example, many changes in the laws made by the Church concerning fast and abstinence. Christ gave only a general command to do penance. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). The Church has full authority to decide what form the penance of the faithful should take, and to change her decisions from age to age according to circumstances.

Changes which the Church makes in her laws should come as no surprise to anyone. Outside the realm of divine commands and the natural moral law, the Church is bound to use her authority to meet given situations by different laws. The Church is an organism filled with vitality to effect through the ages the glory of God and the salvation of men. The Church would be stagnant and dead if her own legislation was never altered to respond to

changing social conditions.

By whom is this right to make laws exercised? This right is exercised by the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and especially by the Pope, who as the successor of the chief of the Apostles, Saint Peter, has the right to make laws for the universal Church.

As Vicar of Christ and Visible Head of the Church the Pope has supreme legislative power in the Church. Thus, the Pope can legislate either alone or in concert with a general council. Of course, to exercise his jurisdiction, the Pope makes use of congregations and tribunals, roughly comparable to cabinet offices. These various departments of Church government make laws in the name of the Holy Father, who in turn passes on and approves their suggested decrees.

Bishops, "placed by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God" (Acts 20:28), have legislative power within their own territory and dependently on the Pope. Each can make laws for his own diocese. When gathered together in council, Bishops can legislate for provinces or for all the faithful of their country.

Bishop Decides

There is little variation among the laws of different dioceses since the universal laws of the Church tend to bring the local into conformity, just as federal laws tend to standardize state laws. One Bishop may, for good reason, give a dispensation from a law of fast or abstinence on a certain day, although the general law obliges elsewhere. Because of the sensational impact,

the public is occasionally made aware of the particular laws of a Bishop against participating in bathing beauty contests or against segregation in Catholic schools or churches. These, however, are rather decrees specifying a natural law than true Church laws.

Bound by Law

The general laws of the Church oblige all and only such persons as are at once subjects of the Church and capable of receiving a law. By Baptism one becomes a member of the Church, and hence it is the baptized who are subject to Church laws. By her laws the Church commands only human and deliberate acts or omissions, and therefore it is only those who can reason that are subject to those laws. Persons habitually unable to reason are all those who have not yet learned the difference between right and wrong (infants or idiots) or who have permanently lost all knowledge of right and wrong (the hopelessly insane). These persons are not bound by Church laws. Moreover, unless the law expressly rules otherwise, those who, although they have attained the use of reason, have not yet completed their seventh year are not bound by purely ecclesiastical laws.

It is a principle in all law that no one should receive a benefit from his rebellion to law. No member of the Church can put himself out of reach of Church laws by "resigning" from the Church, by living in habitual sin (as does a Catholic in an invalid marriage) or even by being excommunicated by the Church. Such members of the Church still

gravely sin when they do not obey the Church's laws, such as the command to receive worthily Holy Communion once a year, to hear Mass every Sunday, or to observe the laws of fasting and abstinence. In point of fact such persons are seldom mentally or spiritually prepared to obey such precepts, but they are not released from their obligations to them. In the case of the excusably ignorant, they would not commit formal sin, but they are under the law nevertheless.

Ordinarily, when Church laws are mentioned, the following six precepts of the Church come to mind:

1. To assist at Mass on every Sunday and on all holydays of obligation.
2. To fast and to abstain on the days appointed.
3. To confess our sins at least once a year.
4. To receive Holy Communion during the Easter time.
5. To contribute to the support of the Church.
6. To observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

Each of these commandments of the Church will be explained in subsequent articles of this booklet. Besides these precepts there are many other laws regulating the government of the Church and the administration of her affairs. The collection of such laws binding the Latin Church is contained in an official book called the *Code of Canon Law*.

The vast majority of the 2414 canons (rules or laws) which make

up the Code have no direct and immediate relationship with the life of the Catholic laity in general. Most of the regulations in the Code pertain to the following: clerical life, ecclesiastical offices, religious state, sacrament of orders, matrimonial contract, sacred places, seminaries, church property and spiritual penalties. Texts and commentaries on the Code of Canon Law are available from Catholic book stores, publishers and libraries.

The present collection of Church law has been in force since 1918. Like the civil law, the present collection did not appear full grown but was the outgrowth of laws that gradually developed through the ages and at length was systematized into a code. Canon Law is a wonderful embodiment of tradition.

Since the Church today is the same in essentials as it was in Apostolic times, Canon Law could not avoid a great respect for tradition. The Church serves men, and as men change in accidentals through the ages so also the laws of the Church will change. The forthcoming ecumenical (universal or general) council of the Church will probably introduce minor revisions into the Code to adopt it better to the needs of modern society. The Church is never afraid to clear away excess lumber. But there is in Canon Law nothing entirely new and much that has been handed down with little change from the first centuries. Canon Law is one of the great stabilizing forces in a turbulent world.

Worship of God

Man is bound by the natural law itself to give public and social worship to God. Reason itself teaches that man set aside some time for the external worship of his Creator, and avoid those things that distract him from such worship. The exact manner in which that worship must be rendered is a matter for determination by positive law.



In the Old Testament economy the Jews were commanded by God to set apart and sanctify, by prayer and rest, one day of the week—the Sabbath. “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day... the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done...” (Exodus 20:8-10). The Old Testament Law observed the Sabbath or last day of the week in memory of the creation of the world, and it abstained most rigorously from work on the Sabbath because there was a divine prohibition and because this rest was a figure of things to come.

But in the New Law the ceremonial precepts of Judaism no longer have force, and the Christian precepts substituted for them were not instituted by Christ Himself but arose from the custom of the Church.

During the life-time of the Apos-

tlés Sunday (or the first day of the week) came to be venerated as the Lord’s Day in memory of the Resurrection, which completed the work of Redemption. (For additional information on the “Sabbath Question,” we recommend our booklet entitled, *Remember the Sabbath... Keep It Holy*, which will be sent free of charge

upon request.)

From the earliest days of the Church also, various special holydays were appointed and made days of obligatory worship, as had been the case with certain feasts in the Old Testament. These holydays were instituted by the Church to recall the principal mysteries or truths of our faith, to give emphasis to the important events in the lives of Christ and of His Blessed Mother, and to bring to mind the virtues and the rewards of the saints. As early as the third and fourth centuries laws were made by the Church confirming the primitive customs of assisting at Mass and resting from labor on Sundays and holydays.

The general law of the Church (Canon 1248) prescribes that on all Sundays and holydays of obligation the faithful are bound to assist at

Mass and to abstain from servile work and certain other activities. Thus the law has a positive and a negative aspect—but, of course, the two aspects are closely interconnected. The fundamental purpose of the law is to secure the sanctification of the prescribed days of precept—particularly by the devout assistance of the faithful at the sacrifice of the Mass. Accordingly, one of the purposes of the prohibition of servile work and other activities is to ensure that the people generally may be freed from their ordinary week-day occupations and thus have the opportunity of rendering to God the public worship which is His due.

The Holy Days

The affirmative part of the first precept of the Church commands the hearing of Mass on all Sundays of the year and on holydays of obligation. The holydays in the United States are these six: Christmas, the Nativity of Our Lord, December 25; Octave of the Birth of Our Lord, January 1; Ascension of Our Lord, 40 days after Easter; the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15; All Saints' Day, November 1; and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (designated by the American Bishops in 1846 as the Patronal Feast of the United States), December 8. In addition to these days, there are four other holydays of obligation in the universal church: Epiphany, January 6; St. Joseph, March 19; Corpus Christi, June 16; and Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29. By reason of social conditions, these four feasts are not at

present holydays of obligation in the United States.

The Church chooses the Mass as the obligatory way of worshipping God because the Mass is the perfect act of worship. The Mass is the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice, the sacrifice of the New Covenant in which Christ through the ministry of the priest offers Himself to God in an unbloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine. An explanation of the Mass, the principal act of Catholic worship, is given in our pamphlet entitled "*The Holy Sacrifice—the Catholic Mass*" which will be sent free upon request.

Any Catholic who does not attend Mass through his own fault and without sufficient reason on the days prescribed commits a grave or mortal sin. Mortal sin is a grievous offense against the law of God. This sin is called mortal, or deadly, because it deprives the sinner of sanctifying grace—the supernatural life of the soul. Mortal sin makes the soul an enemy of God, takes away the merit of all its good actions, deprives it of the right to everlasting happiness in heaven and makes it deserving of everlasting punishment in hell. The guilt of sin is removed through the proper use of the Sacrament of Penance. Likewise they commit a mortal sin who, without sufficient reason, make it impossible for other Catholics—such as their children or their employees—to assist at Holy Mass on the days commanded.

The grave obligation to hear Mass on Sunday and holydays of obligation does not bind the following: those who must care for the

sick; those whose illness does not permit them to go outdoors; those who live a considerable distance from a church; those who must give immediate attention to urgent work. A person in doubt about this obligation should consult a priest.

Worship of God

In reference to the person who hears Mass, the precept requires external assistance and internal devotion. Bodily assistance must be such that one can be said to take part in the divine worship. There is not sufficient presence when the Mass is seen by television or heard over the radio. Moreover, the mere presence in body in the church does not satisfy either the requirements of worship of God or of the law of the Catholic Church. He who goes to church merely to hear the music or look at the pictures does not hear Mass, for lack of *intention*. He who sleeps soundly all through the service does not hear Mass for lack of *attention*. One who wills to perform what the Church requires, and who knows what is going on before him, either by thinking on the Mass itself or on other pious subjects, satisfies his obligation of hearing Mass.

A whole Mass must be heard—that is, all the ceremonies from the prayers at the foot of the altar until the blessing at the end, and it is irreverent to leave church without necessity before the priest has left the altar. It would be a serious sin to miss without good reason an important or principal part of the Mass, as for example the Consecration. Those who for good reason are unable to fulfill the precept of the

Church are not excused from the divine precept of worshipping God. Hence, those who are really obliged to miss Mass should sanctify the Lord's Day by whatever private prayer or devotion they may wish to substitute.

The negative part of the first precept is concerned with servile works, that is, labor of a kind that tends to make one unfit for devotion or that shows disrespect for the sacredness of the day. In the first centuries of Christianity the term servile work was not used in relation to the Sunday observance. But the faithful felt that it was fitting to abstain on the Lord's Day from any work which might impede the due fulfillment of the obligation of religious worship. Out of this original voluntary and almost instinctive abstention the custom of the Sunday rest grew and developed and later found expression in positive law. It was only about the sixth century that the obligation of the Sunday rest came to be compared with the law of the Sabbath observance formulated in the Book of Leviticus 23:7: "You shall do no servile work therein." Thus, and henceforth, the familiar term servile work found a place in Christian theology.

The Lord's Day

Through the subsequent centuries various attempts were made to define the term "servile work". The most commonly accepted description today is to say that servile work is that which is done principally by bodily labor, is intended immediately for the utility of the body, and is the kind of work which was done

by slaves (hence the adjective servile) in times past. In the common estimation of men, the kind of work which is generally prohibited on Sundays and holydays is the daily toil or occupation which is engaged upon as a means of livelihood. It is this toil which constitutes the servitude of man to his fellow-men and which normally inhibits or endangers that freedom and rest which are necessary for the due exercise of divine worship. Sunday is a day of rest, and if one does his regular weekday work on Sunday, he is not resting. He is making Sunday a workday, just like any other day. The purpose of the precept is to set one free from his routine, daily cares of the world so that he may devote himself to divine things. In practice, a member of the Church in doubt about a particular kind of work should consult a priest. In determining what is servile work, the priest must consider not only the nature of the work itself but also the way in which it is done, the light in which it is commonly regarded and other circumstances.

Greed . . . or God?

During World War II and since, there has become observable a tendency to encroach more and more upon the Sunday rest. It is true, indeed, that the encroachment was to a large extent unavoidable, and so excusable, owing to the exigencies of war and war conditions. But we should not allow ourselves to be deluded into thinking that what was excusable and justifiable in such times should remain the rule when the world and our lives have reverted

to some degree of normality.

Millions of people today work on Sunday who are only the innocent victims of an ever-increasing lust for material wealth. The greedy owners of a big chain-store or super-market decide to stay open on Sunday to grab more business; and then the other merchants of the community feel that they must do business as usual, in self-defense. Christians must make it a matter of conscience to do what is possible to bring the world back to the full and traditional observance of the law of Sunday rest. Each thoughtless and unnecessary purchase forces someone in turn to give up his Sunday rest, and contributes to the growing abuse of public merchandising, which is forbidden on Sunday. Those under Communist domination are not permitted a Sunday rest, a time to worship God. Labor unions in America are finding it increasingly difficult to negotiate contracts not requiring Sunday labor. Only a necessary or a proven public good should permit business to be conducted on Sunday. Christians should make every effort to keep ordinary stores and business houses closed on Sunday so that this special day to worship God will not be lost.

Those who must labor on a Sunday in order to live, or to perform services necessary for the good of society are excused from the negative part of the precept and permitted to work. Reasons that excuse from part of the precept do not excuse from all of it. Hence, those who must labor are still obliged to assist at Mass, unless a serious reason likewise excuses from this obligation;

those who are unable to hear Mass are not thereby justified in doing servile work. When a Catholic is in doubt about the morality of a particular action, the priest should be consulted so that in the light of all the circumstances the proper spiritual advice may be obtained.

Sports or amusements, as such, are not prohibited on Sundays or holidays by the general law of the Church. Of course, if indulgence in forms of amusement is such that thereby the sacred atmosphere of the Sunday is completely destroyed and the minds of the faithful are entirely distracted from religious aspirations and obligations—such indulgence would stand condemned.

The Catholic Church, mindful of the advice of her Divine Founder, recommends joyous and cheerful service of God. A dreary, joyless Sunday of a puritanical sabbatarianism, which is really a throwback to the pharisaic observance against which Christ so frequently inveighed, is not a part of Catholic life. "Rest, combined with religious observances," said Pope Leo XIII, "disposes man to forget for a while the business of everyday life, to turn his thoughts to things heavenly and to the worship which he so strictly owes to the Eternal Godhead. It is this, above all, which is the reason and the motive of the Sunday rest."

How much do you EARN... how much do you GIVE?

| If you give 1-hour's pay weekly | | | If you tithe, give 10% of salary | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Weekly Wages | Weekly Donation | Annual Total | Weekly Wages | Weekly Donation | Annual Total |
| \$ 50 | \$1.25 | \$ 65.00 | \$ 50 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 260.00 |
| 60 | 1.50 | 78.00 | 60 | 6.00 | 312.00 |
| 70 | 1.75 | 91.00 | 70 | 7.00 | 364.00 |
| 80 | 2.00 | 104.00 | 80 | 8.00 | 416.00 |
| 90 | 2.25 | 117.00 | 90 | 9.00 | 468.00 |
| 100 | 2.50 | 130.00 | 100 | 10.00 | 520.00 |
| 110 | 2.75 | 143.00 | 110 | 11.00 | 572.00 |
| 120 | 3.00 | 156.00 | 120 | 12.00 | 624.00 |
| 130 | 3.25 | 169.00 | 130 | 13.00 | 676.00 |
| 140 | 3.50 | 182.00 | 140 | 14.00 | 728.00 |
| 150 | 3.75 | 195.00 | 150 | 15.00 | 780.00 |
| 160 | 4.00 | 208.00 | 160 | 16.00 | 832.00 |
| 170 | 4.25 | 221.00 | 170 | 17.00 | 884.00 |
| 180 | 4.50 | 234.00 | 180 | 18.00 | 836.00 |
| 190 | 4.75 | 247.00 | 190 | 19.00 | 988.00 |
| 200 | 5.00 | 260.00 | 200 | 20.00 | 1,040.00 |

Be generous to God — He will be generous to you!

Fast and Abstinence

"Time now," the Lord says, "to turn the whole bent of your hearts back to me, with fasting and with mourners' tears. It is your hearts, not the garments you wear, that must be torn asunder. Come back to the Lord your God; he is ever gracious and merciful, ever patient and rich in pardon; even now he is ready to forgive" (Joel 2:12-15).



fasts were observed from sunset to sunset (Judges 20:26). No food or drink was taken on these days. If the fast lasted longer than a day, a little nourishment, enough to maintain life, was allowed. These longer fasts were of three days, or seven days, or many days, or forty days (Exodus 24:18), or perhaps for life (Judith 8:6).

Abstinence from food was recognized in the Old Testament as a means of penance and reparation, propitiation (1 Samuel 7:6), petition (Baruch 1:5), mourning (1 Samuel 31:13), and grief. "And when I had heard these words, I sat down, and wept, and mourned for many days: and I fasted, and prayed before the face of the God of heaven" (2 Esdras 1:4).

Fasting was undertaken as a preparation for a great work (1 Esdras 8:21), to secure victory (Judges 20:26), to avert disaster (Esther 4:3), to please God (Judith 8:6), and to receive divine light. "And I set my face to the Lord my God, to pray and make supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes" (Daniel 9:3).

Among the Hebrews the Day of Atonement and almost all other

Fasting under the Old Law did not consist merely in the privation of food and drink. The Hebrew expression for fasting, *innah naphsho*, is best translated by the words "to afflict one's soul," "to humble one's soul," and means the willful deprivation of what is pleasing to the body and gratifying to self-love. It was customary to refrain, while fasting, from bathing, anointing the body, wearing shoes, exercising the marriage right, etc. Sometimes the rending of garments, the sprinkling of ashes on the head, the wearing of a hair-shirt were outward expressions of fasting. But the Jews were reminded that the spirit of sorrow for sin must prevail and must be accompanied by prayer and works of almsgiving, justice, and mercy. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms: more than to lay up treasures of gold"

we are told in Tobias 12:8.

As in the Old Law so in the New Dispensation of Christ, fasting continues as a means of atoning for sin, controlling disordered desires, and obtaining Divine assistance. To be acceptable to God, fasting must be performed out of love for God and be accompanied by true sentiments of sorrow for sin and charity towards others. The Apostles do not fast as long as the Bridegroom (Christ) is with them, but they will fast when He is gone. "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

In the early days of the Church fasts were frequently observed: during a fast the Holy Spirit made known the divine will in regard to Saul and Barnabas, and after fasting and prayer they received a special blessing for their new work (Acts 13:2-3). St. Paul advised fasting and practiced his own recommendations (2 Corinthians 6:4-5; 2 Corinthians 11:27). The custom of fasting was common among Christians from the beginning and this fact is evidenced by the many references found in the very earliest writings of the Fathers of the Church.

Fast and Abstinence

The second precept of the Church may be concisely stated as follows: to fast and abstain on the days appointed. The easiest way to know the "days appointed" is simply to obtain a Church calendar each year. Most parishes give away such calen-

dars free of charge. The regulations of the Church regarding fasting and abstinence will sound a little involved to one hearing or reading them for the first time, but the same is true for a beginner reading an instructional manual on operating an automobile or an expensive camera. Actually, the ordinary Catholic has little difficulty understanding or even fulfilling these laws. Parish priests announce ahead of time when appointed days will occur and recall the manner of fulfillment.

Who Must Fast?

All members of the Church seven years of age or over who have attained the use of reason are obliged to observe the abstinence days of the Church, unless they are excused or dispensed. *Regulation number one: complete abstinence binds on all Fridays.*

Early Christians seem to have made no distinction between fasting and abstinence. It took time for the precise theological distinctions we have today to come into existence. In the early Church the reference was more often to the general term "fasting" and this term could mean no food at all, or very little food, or restricted kinds of food. At the present time, abstinence refers to the *quality* (what kind) of food that may not be eaten; and fasting is primarily concerned with the *quantity* (how much) food may be eaten.

The law of abstinence forbids the eating of meat and soup, gravy or sauces made from meat. On days of complete abstinence, these foods may not be eaten at all; on days of partial abstinence, they may be eaten

once, at the principal meal.

The question often arises, "Why Friday as a day of complete abstinence?" From earliest times Friday was the usual fast day among all Christians. It was observed in memory of the death of Christ on Friday, in an effort of the faithful to unite their penance and self-denial with those of the Savior. The process by which fasting on Friday became less strict until finally it was reduced to mere abstinence from meat was a gradual one.

In a letter to St. Augustine of Canterbury (604), Pope St. Gregory the Great announced the final form of abstinence which soon became the law: "We abstain from flesh meat and from all things that come from flesh, as milk, cheese, eggs." For almost a thousand years this remained the norm of abstinence for all except those who were excused for reasons of ill health. During the time of Pope Nicholas I (858-867) a law was made forbidding meat on Friday for the whole Church.

Abstinence from "milk foods"—milk, butter, cheese—was never strictly enforced in some European countries because of the lack of substitute foods. The Church granted many dispensations in this matter. The present regulation on abstinence, explained above, was issued in 1918. Catholics abstain from meat on Friday to recall Christ's supreme act of self-denial—His death on the cross.

Another question which arises is "Why meat?" Here again the answer is not very profound. The avoidance of meat was traditionally

an integral part of fasting. Meat is a common food of the great generality of mankind and thus is a good item which members of the universal Church can collectively deny themselves in a spirit of Christian self-denial. The Church could have chosen bread or any common food. It is interesting to note that Catholics are not obliged to eat fish but only to abstain from meat on Friday and fast days.

Lenten Fasts

The second precept of the Church also commands that on the weekdays of Lent all those between the ages of twenty-one years completed and sixty years begun shall eat not more than one full meal a day. *Regulation number two: fasting binds on all days of Lent.* As mentioned previously, fasting is primarily concerned with "how much" food may be eaten. On a day of fast, we may

- (1) eat one full meal without restriction as to amount and kind of food;
- (2) eat two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, taken according to each one's needs; but, together, they should not equal a full meal; and
- (3) drink liquids between meals.

Many early Christians kept a strict two-day fast from Good Friday to Easter Sunday and did not eat or drink at all during this "Passion Fast." Eventually a longer period of fasting was introduced in preparation for Easter, although its observance varied widely in the early centuries. Sunday was always excepted from the fast (as it still is today). During the third and fourth centuries most churches adopted a forty

days' fast, in imitation of Christ Who had fasted forty days in the desert (Luke 4:2). St. Athanasius (373), Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, after having traveled to Rome and over the greater part of the Roman Empire in Europe, wrote in the year 339 that "the whole world" fasted forty days. The official term of the forty days' fast, *Quadragesima* (fortieth), is first mentioned in the fifth canon (decree) of the Council of Nicaea (325). At the time of St. Gregory, sixth century, the word "Lent" was generally applied to the period of Lenten fast.

The observance of Lent in its early practice consisted of eating only once a day, toward evening; nothing else except a little water was taken all day. After the eighth century, the time for this one and only meal was advanced to the hour of the None in the liturgical prayer (meaning the ninth hour of the Roman day, which is three o'clock in the afternoon). This meal was gradually transferred to the middle of the day (hence our word "noon" from None). The noonday meal did not become a general practice until the fourteenth century.

For 1,200 Years

And it was not until the ninth century that less rigid laws of fasting were introduced. It came about in 817 when the monks of the Benedictine order, who did much labor in the fields and on the farms, were allowed to take a little food in the evening, while they listened to the daily spiritual reading of the *Collationes* (collected instructions). Our word "collation" meaning a slight

repast comes from this.

Eventually the Church extended the new laws to the laity as well and by the end of medieval times they had become universal practice; everybody ate a light evening meal in addition to the main meal at noon. The present custom of taking some breakfast on fasting days is of very recent origin, the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Exceptions

One final regulation of the second precept has to do with those few days each year when Catholics are expected to do double duty—fast and abstain. *Regulation number three: (a) fast and complete abstinence on Ash Wednesday, Holy Saturday, and the vigils (days preceding) of the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Christmas; (b) fast and partial abstinence on Ember Wednesdays and Ember Saturdays and the vigil of Pentecost.*

Neither fast nor abstinence obliges when a vigil falls on Sunday, or when a holyday of obligation falls on Friday.

While on active service, all members of the Armed Forces are dispensed from the Church precept of fast and abstinence except on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the vigil of Christmas. The dispensation is personal and applies to the individual wherever he may be. It also applies to his wife, children, parents and servants if he is habitually residing with them, whether on or off the post.

The regulations of the Church on fast and abstinence are serious laws. They bind under the pain of grave

sin. One cannot be frivolous in finding reasons to excuse himself from them. There must be a serious, real, grave inconvenience — something similar to the inconvenience which would excuse one from attending Mass on Sunday. It need not be overwhelming or extreme hardship but neither may it be something silly or trivial in comparison with the importance and severity of the law.

Dispensation

Saint John Chrysostom (407), Patriarch of Constantinople, gave this instruction: "If your body is not strong enough to continue fasting all day, no wise man will reprove you; for we serve a gentle and merciful Lord who expects nothing of us beyond our strength." When health or the ability to work would be seriously impaired, the regulations regarding fast and abstinence do not oblige. In doubt concerning these regulations or their application, one should consult the parish priest or his confessor. For a just cause, a parish priest can dispense his subjects from the law of fast or of abstinence, or of both, in particular cases. He can dispense individuals or particular families of his parish. Furthermore, the bishop of the diocese, when there is a gathering of many people, or when there is question of public health, can dispense a particular locality or even the whole diocese from the law of fast or abstinence, or of both.

Pope St. Leo I (461) pointed out that fasting is a means and not an end in itself; its purpose is to foster pure, holy and spiritual activity. The Church requires her members to fast

and to abstain in order that they may control the desires of the flesh, raise their minds more freely to God, and make satisfaction for sin. It is not because meat and other foods are evil in themselves that the Church prescribes days of fast and abstinence. The Church commands us to deny ourselves for the glory of God and the good of our souls. Just as the physician can forbid certain food to his patient for the sake of temporal good, so for the sake of spiritual good God forbade to Adam the fruit of one tree, and to the Jews the flesh of certain animals; and the Church from the days of the Apostles (Acts 15:29) has exercised the same right.

There are a number of interesting questions which arise regarding the regulations of the Church on fast and abstinence. Perhaps a brief answer to a few such questions would be of interest to our readers.

What is Meat?

What is to be understood by the term "meat"? Under the name flesh meat are included all land and warm-blooded animals. Moreover, under the name meat are included all the parts of an animal, but not its fruit: eggs, milk, and things made from milk, such as butter, cheese. The law of abstinence forbids the eating of flesh meat and broth made from meat. Under the name broth is included any liquid made from the juice of meat, such as beef tea, mutton soup, chicken broth, etc. The law does not forbid condiments made from animal fats, as for example, margarine, lard, suet, bacon drippings, etc.

If a Catholic dines in the home of a non-Catholic friend on Friday and meat is served, may he partake of it on the score that the embarrassment he would cause his friend by a refusal would constitute a sufficient inconvenience to excuse him from the law of abstinence? In America, where the regulations of the Church are generally well known, a Catholic should act in accord with the dictates of his conscience and courteously decline the meat portion of the dinner. The host might be slightly embarrassed but at least he will not be scandalized. Moreover, in this country, there would be little inconvenience in providing the Catholic guest with an adequate meal of abstinence food.

How is the term "liquids" to be understood which are permitted on days of fasting? Lenten and other similar fasts are not broken by liquids which are beverages rather than food, or which are used to allay thirst, or assist digestion, and not chiefly to nourish, such as water, teas, coffee, light cocoa, wine, beer, lemonade, fruit juice, milk, etc. Milk shakes, malted milks, soups, and similar liquids which are food equivalents are not permitted between meals on a day of fast.

Is gelatin permitted on Friday or days of abstinence? Yes. While gelatin is a meat product, it is not popularly considered as meat. The Church accepts the general popular judgment as to what things are to be considered "flesh meat."

Is one dispensed from the Church regulations of fast and abstinence free of all obligation regarding works of self-denial? Since the precept of the Church is in substance based upon the natural law, those who are dispensed from Church law are not dispensed from the natural law of temperance. Such dispensed persons should practice some acts of self-denial according to their ability. Acts of sacrifice by self-denial in alcoholic beverages, tobacco, sweets, etc., or by mortification in the quantity or quality of food taken, enable us to strengthen our character, gain a mastery over our passions and desires, satisfy for past offenses, and win a higher degree of friendship with God. "Now he (God) calls upon all men everywhere *to repent*; inasmuch as he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world with justice by a Man (Christ) whom he has appointed, and whom he has guaranteed to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).

"O almighty and everlasting God, Who by salutary abstinence dost heal us both in soul and body; we humbly beseech Thy majesty, that appeased by the fervent devotion of those who fast, Thou wouldst grant us help now and in time to come."

Prayer for Ember Saturday, from the Roman Missal

Annual CONFESSION

The third precept of the Church commands that every baptized person who has entered the Church through valid baptism and who has the use of reason, which begins usually at the age of seven, go to confession at least once a year. Infants are incapable of committing sin, and the unbaptized are incapable of receiving the sacrament of penance or confession.

In our pamphlet entitled, "Yes... *A Priest Can Forgive Your Sins,*" which is sent free of charge upon request, we have presented an explanation of the sacrament of Penance. Here it suffices to briefly review the teaching of the Church on confession and to explain the Church precept which specifies the divine law.

The word "penance" has various meanings. It is a moral virtue, a good habit which inclines the sinner to turn away from his sins, to repent them when they are past and to avoid them for the future. Penance often means reparation. We do penance for our sins: we deny ourselves by fasting, accept sufferings, and perform acts of devotion to expiate our guilt. But here we are speaking



of Penance as a sacrament: an external sign instituted by Christ to give us grace. Christ conferred upon the Apostles the power to forgive sins, and thereby raised the virtue of penance or repentance to a sacrament of the New Testament.

Christ promised to confer upon the Apostles the general power of the keys and also of binding and loosing (both of which powers include the power of forgiving sins), likewise the special power of forgiving sins. The supreme power of the keys and of binding and loosing were promised to Peter (Matthew 16:19), whereas the power of binding and loosing was promised to all the Apostles (Matthew 18:18). Although these passages do not fully prove the existence of the sacrament of Penance, yet they clearly demonstrate the universal religious powers that Christ conferred upon His Apostles.

In a most solemn manner Christ, after His resurrection, bestowed upon the Apostles the power of forgiving sins: "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, so I send you... Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you forgive they are forgiven them;

and whose sins you retain they are retained" (John 20:21-23). It immediately becomes obvious that here is a specific application by Christ of the general power of binding and loosing as referred to above.

In bestowing this power upon the Apostles, it must be taken for granted that Christ permits and accepts in His Church on earth the presence of sinners who are in need of forgiveness after they have received the sacrament of Baptism. The Apostles made use of this power to forgive sins through the administration of Baptism (Acts 2:38), and also afterwards in regard to those already baptized (1 Corinthians 5:4-13; 2 Corinthians 2:7-11; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10).

The words by which Christ conferred upon the Apostles and the Church the power to forgive sins are of a general nature, admitting of no exceptions: whatever they bind or unbind on earth will be ratified by God; whose sins they forgive these sins are forgiven them, and whose sins they retain these sins are retained. Thus, Christ put no restriction upon the Apostles as to either persons or sins.

To Bind or Loose

The power to forgive sins is a true judicial power and is exercised in judicial form. "To forgive and to retain sins," "to bind and to unbind," are judicial acts. They require a judgment to be made according to the worthiness or unworthiness of the penitent. Sin is a type of crime; it is a violation of law; and crimes are tried in court. There is a formal process: accusation is brought

against the criminal, evidence is presented, pleas are made, and a judgment is given, after which sentence is pronounced or a pardon or parole is granted. It is fitting that such judicial process should be chosen as the external sign for the forgiveness of sin.

In the sacrament of Penance accusation is made by the penitent himself. Circumstances are given. The sinner frankly admits his guilt, but expresses sorrow and throws himself on the mercy of Christ. Then judgment is rendered on the basis of the evidence at hand. It is not arbitrary judgment; it is based on the penitent's own accusations and pleadings and particularly upon his evidences of sorrow and also of good intention from this time on.

Christ gave the Apostles power to forgive sins for the good of souls. He gave it to them in their capacity as priests; it was needed for the spiritual work of the Church. And it is evidently needed as much today as in the first century. There are as many sinners now as then, and they have as much need of forgiveness.

Christ is a God of infinite wisdom. He knew the weakness of human nature, its temptations and trials. He saw that the vast majority of adults are not only in danger of sin but actually do sin, and grievously. He saw that if He did not give man some hope of recovering sanctifying grace after Baptism, His suffering and death might be in vain. Hence He instituted a sacrament that would give us the definite assurance of pardon without its being left to our private presumption.

Penance is a sacrament; it gives us

graces once it is received worthily. It is not the emotional intensity of our own repentance which obtains forgiveness, but the sacrament. It is not our own merits which produce graces, but the merits of Christ which are brought to us through the sacrament. However, in many respects, the graces of the sacrament can be increased by the intensity of our devotion, by the sincerity and thoroughness of our repentance, and by the honesty and practical firmness of our good resolutions.

In a very true sense it is the priest, acting in the name of Christ, who forgives sins. The priest pronounces the judgment of forgiveness, and by giving that judgment he confers the sacrament. He forgives as the minister of the sacrament. When the priest baptizes he forgives sin by administering the sacrament of Baptism. In confession he forgives sin by administering the sacrament of Penance.

True Contrition

In order to make a good confession, the penitent must know his sins and be honestly sorry for them; he must make a firm proposal of amendment and be willing to enter into the spirit of reparation for his sins. And he must confess his sins frankly. All grace comes from God alone. Only when the penitent goes to confession with the proper dispositions can the graces of this sacrament be enjoyed. The graces of the sacrament come directly from God. The notion that one can "buy forgiveness" is erroneous—in fact, impossible. The sinner might misuse the sacrament and deceive the priest,

but God cannot be deceived. Any serious misuse or abuse of the sacrament of Penance only results in the committing of the greater sin of sacrilege.

Too often the sacrament of Penance is viewed only as a mere declaration that God has forgiven us. In reality the sacrament gives us many graces. Here are some of the things the sacrament of Penance does for our souls:

(1) It restores sanctifying grace, if we have lost it by mortal sin. In other words, it revives supernatural life in our souls when we have destroyed that life by separating ourselves from the friendship of God through serious sin.

(2) It increases the degree or intensity of sanctifying grace in our souls, if we receive the sacrament while we are still in the state of grace. Little differences or venial sins cool the intensity of our love for God; the sacrament of Penance heals such misunderstandings and warms the affection existing between God and ourselves.

(3) If through mortal sin, we have closed heaven to ourselves, the sacrament opens it up to us again. We are restored to our adoption as the sons of God. As sons of our heavenly Father we are invited to come and live in His home.

(4) The eternal punishments of hell are taken away. If we should die in a state of serious sin, of enmity with God, we would remain His enemies forever. We would be separated from Him, from Whom proceeds all that is good, and beautiful, and orderly.

(5) At least a portion of the

temporal punishment due us for sins is taken away. We do not go entirely free when the guilt of our sins is forgiven; God's justice still requires a token payment for the harm we have done. The sacrament of Penance does not take away all such satisfaction due to God; it does not relieve us of all need for penance, prayer, sacrifice, and indulgences. The sacrament prepares the way rather for all these to be effective.

(6) The sacrament of Penance brings those graces which incline us to works of reparation and atonement. It gives us the supernatural incentive to do penance for past sins, so that all the enduring effects of them may be taken away.

God's Grace

(7) The sacrament gives us the graces we need to avoid sins for the future. All of us have daily need of God's help to avoid sin, just as we have need of vitamins each day to stay healthy. This sacrament brings such strengthening graces that the Church encourages frequent confession, even though we have not been guilty of serious sin. Temptations are a part of daily life and only with God's grace can we avoid them.

(8) It restores the supernatural virtues which we have lost by serious sin; or it strengthens these virtues when they have been weakened by venial sin. Faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, obedience, patriotism, patience, humility, chastity...all these supernatural virtues are necessary if we wish to live in accord with the will of God.

(9) The sacrament of Penance restores the merits of our past good

actions. We diminish these merits by our venial sins and we throw them away entirely when we commit mortal sin. Merits are a share in the good works of Christ; they are given us when we do works of love in union with Him. They have much to do with determining our eternal status in heaven.

(10) Besides all these supernatural benefits, we get much natural help from the sacrament. In the confessional we often find advice and encouragement, a solution to our problems, or a frank warning about the dangers we face. The certainty that the guilt of one's sins is removed forever, through the sacrament, brings a conviction of well-being that is experienced nowhere else in the realm of human activity.

For almost every member of the Church, there is always some natural feeling of reluctance to the confession of sins in the sacrament of Penance. The basic reason for such an emotion is simply pride. One who thinks seriously about the spiritual life knows that it takes more courage to break the laws of God than to humbly confess such failings. As long as the sinner has courage to resist human pride, which is often encouraged by the devil, and to make sincere and humble use of this sacrament, he need have no fear of the final and eternal judgment. Actually, the many beneficial graces and true consolations mentioned above, which come with the proper use of confession, are more than enough to compensate the brief moments of "unwillingness" which may precede the use of this needed sacrament of penance.

The precept of annual confession obliges under pain of mortal sin, for its purpose is of vital importance. The purpose of the law is to ensure the use of the sacrament instituted by Christ for forgiveness and to keep sinners from delaying their repentance too long. If a good business man takes stock of his assets and liabilities at least once a year and those who are careful of their health have medical attention or examination at least yearly, it is most reasonable that the faithful should settle their spiritual accounts and attend to the well-being of their souls within an equal period of time.

In the early centuries when fervor was greater and conditions different, no general law on the frequency of confession was needed; but there is no doubt that the present precept,

which dates back to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), met well the need that began after the gradual change from the early penitential discipline.

The Church encourages frequent use of the sacrament of Penance. Those in the religious life—Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Sisters, Brothers—are expected to go to confession weekly. Confession at least once a month is ordinarily expected of a good Catholic layman. Members of the Church can best be guided about frequent confession by their own confessor. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John 1:8-10).

EUCHARISTIC FAST

Regulations for those receiving the Sacrament of Communion

| Persons | Food and Drink Allowed | Time Allowed* |
|----------------------------|--|------------------|
| The Faithful in General | Solid food and alcoholic liquids | 3 hours |
| | Non-alcoholic liquids | 1 hour |
| The Sick | Non-alcoholic liquids Medicine, liquid or solid | No time limit |
| | Solid food and alcoholic liquids | 3 hours |

*Period of time prior to reception of Holy Communion. Water never breaks the fast for anyone.

Easter COMMUNION



Since Our Lord willed the Eucharist to be the necessary nourishment of the soul's journey (John 6:54), and the perpetual memorial of Himself (1 Corinthians 11:24), the Church in her fourth precept has prescribed that all the faithful who have attained the use of reason go to Holy Communion at least once a year and that during the Easter time. Ordinarily the Easter time is the Paschal Season, from Palm Sunday to Low Sunday; however, in the United States, by privilege, Easter time begins on the first Sunday of Lent and ends on Trinity Sunday, or the First Sunday after the Feast of Pentecost.

In order to fulfill the precept, a worthy Communion must be received. Since the law requires that the Easter duty be made, not only within the Easter time, but also once a year, it follows that he who neglects Communion during the Easter period is still bound by the law to go to Communion before the beginning of the next Paschal season. The Eucharist is a daily bread, and the law does not permit it to be neglected by anyone beyond a year; and, since the Paschal Season brings

the anniversary of Christ's sacrifice and of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, it is the time most fitly chosen for the annual obligatory Communion.

"The bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in yourselves... for My flesh is real food, and My blood is real drink" (John 6:52-56). The strictly literal interpretation of these words follows from the entire context of the passage; the attitude of the Jews in murmuring against Christ and that of some disciples in leaving Him are clear evidence that they had understood Him literally and not figuratively.

At the Last Supper the Holy Eucharist was instituted. The words of the institution have come down to us in four different versions, and of these the two which are more detailed are called "Pauline" (Luke 22:19ff; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25), while the other two are called "Petrine" (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24). In the accounts of the consecration of the bread the four texts have the same decisive read-

ing: "This is My body"; then Luke adds, "which is given for you," and Paul, "which is for you," to emphasize the sacrificial character of the consecrated bread.

In the consecration of the wine the decisive words of Matthew and Mark are, "This is My blood of the (New) Covenant"; whereas Luke and Paul give substantially the same in the words, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood" (that is, the wine contained in this cup is the beginning or cause of the New Covenant through the agency of My blood). Again to emphasize the sacrificial character of the consecrated wine, Matthew adds to the formula of consecration of the blood of Christ the words: "which is poured out for many for the remission of sins"; Mark: "which is poured out for many"; and Luke: "which is poured out for you." Furthermore, Luke and Paul have the command of Christ to the Apostles: "Do this in remembrance of Me" . . . words as uttered at the consecration of the bread; Paul inserts them a second time at the consecration of the wine.

The decisive words in these passages: "This is My Body, this is My blood," must be understood in the literal sense. In other words, when Christ made this pronouncement the entire substance of the bread was changed into His body and the entire substance of the wine was changed into His blood, there remaining only the appearances of bread and wine. In the Eucharist Christ is really, truly and substantially present with His flesh and blood, body and soul, humanity and divinity. Additional information on

this sacrament of the Eucharist is available in our pamphlet, "*Christ's Seven Sacraments.*"

The ministers of consecration or of offering the Sacrifice of the Mass are the Bishops and priests of the Church. By the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me," Christ instituted the priesthood and commanded His Apostles and their successors in the priesthood to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood. The recipients of this sacrament are all the faithful who, having attained the proper age, are in the state of sanctifying grace.

Greatest Graces

With the consecration of bread and wine, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist comes into being. The sacramental reception of the Holy Eucharist by the faithful is referred to as "receiving Holy Communion." The fourth precept of the Church regulates the minimum in the use of the Eucharist. It is the ardent desire of the Church that her members receive Holy Communion frequently, and even daily if possible.

The Church encourages the use of this sacrament because, of all the sacraments, the Eucharist brings the greatest graces. Some of its effects are:

(1) It unites our body and soul to Christ in an intimate union of friendship and love. This love which we share with Christ in Communion extends itself to all His brethren.

(2) It increases sanctifying grace in the soul. As food sustains and increases vital human functions, so the Eucharist enhances the spiritual life.

(3) It cleanses the soul of venial sins, of lesser faults, just as food repairs the minor ailments of our bodies. The Eucharist is then the remedy of our daily weaknesses.

(4) It fortifies the soul against mortal sin. Just as the proper food keeps the body from sickness, weakness, and early death, so the Holy Eucharist gives us the grace to resist temptations which could produce sickness and death within the soul.

(5) It lessens the temporal punishment due to past sin. The reception of Christ, sacramentally present in the Holy Eucharist, increases charity in the soul, and as the love of friendship with God burns brighter, past and forgiven misunderstandings are healed completely.

(6) It assures the glorious resurrection of our body. Our Lord promised that if we would eat His flesh and drink His blood He would raise us up on the last day (John 6:55).

(7) It is a pledge of our future glory and happiness in heaven. "If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever" (John 6:52).

To bring the faithful to Mass and Holy Communion with ever increasing frequency, the Church adjusts her own regulations in accord with notable social changes.

At the present time, Bishops may permit the daily celebration of Mass in the hours after midday whenever the spiritual good of the faithful requires it. Evening Masses are becoming more common with time, enabling many working people to assist at Mass and to receive Holy Communion after working hours.

Regulations pertaining to the Eu-

charistic fast are now simple, uniform, and easy to remember. The faithful need only fast or refrain from solid food and alcoholic liquids for three hours and from non-alcoholic liquids for one hour before receiving Holy Communion.

Exceptions

For the sick, even though not confined to bed, the rule regulating solid food and alcoholic liquids is the same as above, that is, fast from such for three hours. However, the sick may take non-alcoholic liquids, and true medicines in liquid or solid form without any time limitation, that is, up to the time of Communion. Just prior to the actual reception of Communion, the sick could use such non-alcoholic beverages as fruit juices, milk, tea or coffee, and medicine in liquid or solid form.

Since water does not break the Eucharist fast, it may be taken by anyone at any time before the reception of Holy Communion.

The purpose of the fast before receiving Holy Communion is to make one mindful of the great sacrament about to be received. Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is present in a sacramental manner in the Holy Eucharist. By an act of self-denial, members of the Church prepare themselves for the sublime moment of intimate union with God Himself in the reception of Holy Communion.

In the fourth century St. Ambrose wrote, "If it (the Eucharist) is daily bread, why do you take it once a year? Take daily what is to profit you daily. So live that you may deserve to receive it daily" (*On the Sacraments*).

Church Support



The fifth precept of the Church requires the faithful to contribute to the support of the Church. This commandment of the Church means that each member of the Church is obliged to bear his fair share of the financial burden of the Holy See, of the diocese, and of the parish. This universal law of the Church does not specify the amount that must be given, nor does it determine the precise manner in which support is to be obtained. Members of the Church are to give in accord with their means. The manner of giving is left to the special statutes and customs of each country.

This obligation binds in conscience, and at times even under the pain of serious sin. Though formulated by the Church, this precept is basically a commandment of God, for it is a divine ordinance which requires us to support those who preach the Gospel and serve the altar. Since we are creatures of God, the very law of our being demands that we make provision for the giving of public and social worship to God. For this worship pastors, as well as churches, are necessary.

Those who serve the common

welfare, whether in spiritual or in temporal matters, should be supported by those whom they serve; for, as their time and labor is given to others, it is a duty of justice that these latter make a return for the benefits received. Hence, just as citizens are naturally bound to

contribute to public officials, so are the faithful naturally bound to contribute to support necessary for the ministers of religion.

Sacred Scripture expressly states that there is an obligation to support the ministers of religion. The Mosaic Law prescribed a tithe (a tenth part) in a form of land tax on the chief products of the soil (grain and fruits) as a means of support for the Levites (Leviticus 27:30), who were responsible for services connected with the worship of God. Malachias pointed out that the failure to observe this law meant disloyalty to God and had a disastrous effect upon the temple worship. "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse; for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Do but carry your tithe into

the tithe-barn, for my temple's needs, and see if I do not open the windows of heaven for you, rain down blessing to your hearts' content" (Malachias 3:8-10). Jesus Sirach taught that a man should dedicate his tithe with gladness, "in every gift show a cheerful countenance, and sanctify thy tithes with joy" we read in Sirach 35:11.

The Church of the New Testament is by divine institution and constitution a perfect and independent society. It has a right to ask of the faithful the means necessary for divine worship, for the suitable support of the clergy, and for the attainment of its other particular purposes. The Pauline principle (1 Corinthians 9:13-14) that "they who serve the altar should partake with the altar" and "they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel" was fully accepted by the faithful from the earliest years of the Church. As a matter of fact, the right of the Church to require support, and the corresponding obligation of the faithful to provide it, have hardly ever been questioned within the true fold. Of course, the manner and the measure in which the support was given have indeed varied down through the ages.

Church's Needs

In the early centuries of the Church, the influence of the methods of support current under the Old Dispensation was strong. Hence we find reference to the giving of offerings, first fruits, and tithes—particularly to the last mentioned. At the end of the sixth century, the custom of tithes was given the status

of law; and by the eighth century the tithe was fully recognized as a fiscal obligation confirmed by civil law. Later, as happened in many other spheres, the tithes were usurped and laicized by the secular princes and gradually fell into disuse almost universally. The law of the Church today simply states that in regard to the payment of tithes and first fruits, the particular statutes and laudable customs of each country are to be observed, which is another way of saying that where the practice of such payment still exists it may be preserved.

But tithes as such are for the most part no longer paid. In their place we have, in this and many other countries, the free will offerings of the faithful. In regard also to voluntary offerings, the particular statutes and laudable customs of the place are to be observed. With due regard for the requirements of equity, the Bishop can determine the manner and the measure in which the means necessary for the support of the clergy and the Church will be provided by the faithful under his jurisdiction. In the absence of written statutes or episcopal regulations, it is custom which determines the manner in which the necessary support will be provided for the upkeep of religion.

The obligation of contributing to the Church is one of justice as well as of religion, for there is a quasi-contract between the faithful on the one side and the Church and its ministers on the other side, the latter being obliged to give spiritual ministries and benefits, the former to supply the temporal sustenance

and means. Hence St. Paul compares the salaries given to the clergy to the wages paid to the laborer (1 Corinthians 9:4 ff). He who refuses to contribute to the Church evades payment for services given him and also denies to divine worship his share of support. Moreover, if a large percentage of the faithful fail to make a just contribution, then an undue burden is placed unjustly on the other members of the parish or the Church.

Voluntary Gifts

Each parish is a unit in the Church for the purpose of saving souls. Church buildings are a necessity. Catholic children have a right to an education in which they can learn about God and about their religion. This right means school buildings and teachers. A parish plant—rectory, school, church, convent—is a business operation. But the parish has no product or service on sale for a price. The parish depends on the voluntary contributions of the parishioners to meet its numerous bills. Such contributions are ordinarily collected immediately preceding the offertory of the Mass on Sunday, and hence called the "offertory collection."

A pastor is fortunate if the Sunday collection is sufficient to meet the various financial responsibilities of his parish. Regrettably, some pastors must depend on bazaars, dinners, raffles, bingo, pew rent, rummage sales, seat collections, etc., to keep the old parish going. Direct contributions, conscientiously and cheerfully given, are the only means

of Church support worthy of a perfect spiritual society.

A special collection for the Holy Father, often referred to as "Peter's Pence," is taken up each year throughout the Church for the expenses and charities of the Holy See. This collection originated in eighth century England as a tax of a penny on each household and was collected on St. Peter's day, whence came the name. Such a collection lapsed after the Reformation but was revived again in the form of a free will offering about the middle of the nineteenth century. After local expenses have been covered, the funds collected are used for world relief services without regard for religious affiliation. Annually, the Pontifical Relief Committee distributes tons of clothing, provides funds for food and lodging, subsidies for hospitals, staffs for schools in refugee camps, programs for youth, and takes refugees into orphanages and hospitals and aids numbers of them in effecting emigration.

Collections

In the United States three general collections are usually made annually. These are the Catholic University of America, the Propagation of the Faith, and the Catholic Bishops' Thanksgiving Collection for the needy in other lands. In the past fifteen years, the Bishops' collection has made possible the shipping of over 5 billion pounds of goods, valued at over one billion dollars, to war ravaged and needy countries. This material is distributed on the basis of need alone.

Ordinarily, a particular diocese will have annually a general diocesan collection to support their seminary and another to maintain a regular building program. The central office of a diocese is called a chancery office. At this office all the official records of the diocese are preserved and all the general paperwork for the whole diocese put into proper channels and processed.

As the official office of the Bishop, the decisions of the chancery office naturally reflect the mind of the Bishop. Diocesan statutes, made known and interpreted by the chancery office, will specify the offerings ordinarily expected for Masses (Mass stipends) and a few spiritual ministrations (stole fees), for the salaries of pastors, assistant priests, and religious teachers. As offerings and salaries vary in different dioceses, definite information on such matters can be obtained from the diocesan chancery office.

Stole fees or free will offerings made by the faithful on the occasion of baptisms, marriages and funerals are a special discharge of part of the layman's general duty of supporting his pastor. Stole fees constitute part of the general support of a parish. Such offerings are ordinarily determined and regulated by diocesan statute; therefore, one in doubt about such offerings should either consult a priest of the diocese or the diocesan chancery office. A pastor may not refuse his free service to persons who are unable to make such offerings.

Stole fees and Mass stipends are not payments for spiritual func-

tions. Spiritual things cannot be sold. Can a man sell his heart and remain alive? Can we traffic with the things of God and expect the Source of all grace to bestow His blessings? There may have been some attempts in this regard in the past, but it is foolish to think that those concerned were able to take advantage of God. Stole fees and Mass stipends began in ancient times as voluntary offerings for the support of religion. In the course of centuries, these offerings became so sanctioned by custom or by particular law that they are now obligatory when one's means permit.

"It Shall Be Measured"

"Give to the most High according to what he hath given to thee, and with a good eye do according to the ability of thy hands: For the Lord maketh recompense, and will give thee seven times as much" (Sirach 35:12-13). Thus spoke God in the Old Law. What says He in the New? "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they pour into your lap. For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

If every member of the Church followed these divine directives, no pastor would find it necessary to preach about money or lie awake nights attempting to find ways of meeting parish responsibilities. There exists an old proverb which contains much food for thought: "The only thing a dead man holds in his hands are the things he has given to God."

MARRIAGE — a Sacred Vocation

The essence of the marriage contract and the sacrament it may form is found in the expression of mutual consent. "Adam, will you take Eve for your lawful wife." "I will." A similar question is asked of Eve, and she too answers, "I will." They are now man and wife, for the rest of their lives. Because marriage is a contract and, between the baptized a sacrament, both the State and the Church have a right and obligation to legislate concerning its administration and reception.

"But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother; and shall cleave to his wife. And they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10: 6-9). Marriage is the religious and legal bond uniting husband and wife for the begetting and rearing of offspring, for mutual help and assistance, and, after the fall of our first parents, for the regulation of the sexual instinct in accordance with the dictates of reason.

God planned marriage as an es-



sential part of His over-all project for the human race; so He designed its nature to fit in with that project. Marriage has purposes. Its first and primary purpose and privilege is joining with God in the formation of a new living body, the creation of a new human soul, and the beginning of a new personality which will live forever. Although this creative purpose can be achieved outside marriage, still the completion and perfection of it demands the permanency, love, and security of the home. So marriage is intended for the proper care, love, and formation of the children who are conceived and created in it.

God's second purpose for marriage is also achieved in the home. God wants man and woman to be happy together, to find in each other a completion of their individual personalities, a total expression of their love and emotional needs, and mutual help to attain that sanctity which is their purpose in life and eternity. For the proper attainment of these purposes the home must have order, peace, love and permanence. So marriage must exist between one man and one woman, ex-

clusively; and it must last as long as they both remain alive. Without these features the home will be divided, selfish and insecure.

Since God has planned the nature of the marriage contract, determined its purposes, and established its essential features of unity and indissolubility, the Church can only accept God's plans and laws, teach them to the world and insist that they be honored. By the sixth precept of the Church, Catholics are obliged to observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage. Since there are a number of regulations which pertain to marriage, only those more commonly affecting the laity will be briefly explained.

Marriage Regulations

The Church tries constantly to make people aware of the sacredness and seriousness of marriage so that they may enter this vocation calmly and carefully and thus experience a state of life which is happy, secure, and a means to eternal life. With these purposes in mind, the Church has laws on engagement, prenuptial instructions, investigation of freedom and intention, publication of banns, and marriage before a priest.

Engagements are encouraged as a sane preparation for marriage, but they should not last too long because of their moral dangers. Though the Church has specific regulations regarding formal engagements, still she leaves the parties free to break the engagement for good reason.

The pastor is required to instruct the parties to be married on the sanctity of matrimony, the mutual

obligation of the spouses, and the obligation of parents toward their children. When it is a case of mixed marriage, most Bishops require a series of six instructions before the marriage may take place. In general a mixed marriage is one between a member of the Catholic Church and one who does not accept the doctrines of the Catholic Faith, even though perhaps validly baptized.

To avoid invalid and unhappy marriages, the Church requires preliminary investigations. The pastor shall ask the bride and groom separately whether they are under any impediment, whether they give consent freely, etc. Ordinarily, documents of Baptism and Confirmation are requested.

The pastor must publicly announce the parties between whom a marriage is to be contracted. This ancient custom is called "announcing the banns" of marriage, and ordinarily takes place on the three Sundays immediately preceding the date of the wedding. All the faithful are bound, if they know of any serious reason why the marriage should not take place, to make known this information to the pastor before the celebration of the marriage. The purpose of such a regulation is to prevent irreverence to the sacrament, sin, and harm to the neighbor, some or all of which evils necessarily result from an unlawful or invalid marriage.

The Church law requires that a Catholic must be married before a priest and two witnesses, and no Catholic—even a fallen-away one—can be married in any other way, at least in normal circumstances. The

Catholic Church alone has the right to make laws regulating the marriages of baptized persons because the Church alone has authority over the sacraments and over sacred matters affecting baptized persons. Although the Catholic Church has the right to make laws regarding the marriages of all baptized persons, the Church does not in all cases bind baptized non-Catholics by these laws. Non-Catholics are bound by the laws when, for example, they freely decide to marry Catholics.

Priest Must Witness

A Catholic must be married "before a priest." The attempted marriage of a Catholic before a minister or a civil official, such as a judge, a justice of the peace, a squire, or any clerk of court, is not really a marriage. A Catholic who remains in such an unlawful union is living in sin just as much as if he or she had never gone through such a ceremony.

Regarding the marriages of baptized persons, the State has the authority to make laws concerning their effects that are merely civil. By the civil effects of matrimony are meant the rights and obligations of husband and wife as citizens: for example, the right to share in the property of the other.

When no invalidating impediment exists, the Church recognizes the marriage of a non-Catholic as valid. The marriage of two baptized non-Catholics is also a sacrament, just the same as the marriage of any Catholic couple. Moreover, such a marriage, once consummated, can never be dissolved by any power on earth. The marriage of two non-bap-

tized persons is a valid marriage too, but it is not a sacrament. Such a valid contract of marriage can never be dissolved as long as both remain unbaptized. The Catholic Church teaches, therefore, that two non-Catholics, whether baptized or not baptized, who without any impediment of divine or civil law give the proper consent of marriage to each other are validly married. Their children are legitimate in the eyes of the Catholic Church and their marriage ordinarily binds them for life.

If a non-Catholic couple, validly married for many years, become Catholics, must they be remarried in the Church? Do they have to go through any ceremony at all? The answer is NO to both questions. It might only be suggested that they receive the nuptial blessing of the Church, but no serious obligation exists to so act.

Impediments

The Church has laws which forbid marriages between certain individuals. We call these laws impediments. One such impediment is age. A man before completing his sixteenth year and a woman before completing her fourteenth cannot contract a valid marriage. These ages are very low, but the Church's laws are for the whole world and customs differ in various countries.

Pastors of souls are required to deter young people from marrying before the age at which, according to the received customs of the country, marriage is usually contracted. In America the civil law of our states varies not only regarding the minimum age for marriage, but also con-

cerning the effect of marriage under that age. Hence the civil laws of the place must be consulted. Church law forbids pastors to assist at the marriage of minors—under twenty-one—unless the parents give their consent or the Bishop is consulted.

“Ungodly Children”

Mixed marriages with the original inhabitants of Palestine were forbidden by the Mosaic Law as a proximate occasion of idolatry and polytheism. “You shall not intermarry with them, neither giving your daughters to their sons nor taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn your sons from following me to serving other gods...” (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; Exodus 34:11-16). To prevent marriages which have little hope of true happiness and stability, the Church forbids unions between parties of different religious convictions and practices. Mixed marriages often bring about family discord, loss of faith on the part of the Catholic, and neglect of the religious training of the children. “And it is better to die without children, than to leave ungodly children” (Sirach 16:4).

For grave reasons—hope of conversion of the non-Catholic, the avoiding of public discord, the fear of a mere civil marriage, the fewness of Catholics in the district, etc.—the Church sometimes permits mixed marriages and such a permission is called a dispensation. Before granting the dispensation for a mixed marriage, the Church demands that the danger to the faith of the Catholic party or of the offspring be removed and asks that guarantees

to that effect be given by explicit promises made before a representative of the Church.

The non-Catholic party must promise not to endanger the faith of the Catholic; both parties must promise that the children born of the marriage will be baptized in the Catholic Church alone and educated solely in the Catholic religion. The Catholic party, moreover, must promise to strive for the conversion of the non-Catholic party by prayer and good example. Unless these promises are made, the Church will grant no exemption from her law; and unless the Bishop is convinced that the promises are made in good faith and will be kept, he may not grant the dispensation.

Happy Union

Those who do not understand that marriage is a sacrament divinely instituted and that only one Church was established by the Lord are apt to consider these regulations of the Church rigorous and unreasonable. The Church is the divine guardian of faith and of the religion established by Christ. It can never minimize the dangers of a mixed marriage. The Church knows that conflict and argument may result from it, endangering happiness and peace and that it presents barriers to a complete union of hearts, minds, convictions and sentiments. It often endangers faith, cools religious fervor, and invites neglect of devotional practices. Its greatest problems often confront the children, who may be caught in the midst of conflict and left bewildered, insecure and uncertain.

Several non-Catholic leaflets are in circulation warning non-Catholics not to marry Catholics and bearing such titles as "I Married a Catholic"; "The Mixed Marriage Question"; "Should a Protestant Consent to be Married by a Roman Catholic Priest?" Although these leaflets often grossly misrepresent the teachings of the Catholic Church on mixed marriage, still they agree with the Church that mixed marriages seldom contribute to nuptial bliss.

To enable the non-Catholic to understand the nature and importance of the obligations he is expected to undertake, ordinarily six instructions about things Catholic in general and marital obligations in particular are to be taken prior to marriage. Often the Bishop will require the Catholic party to attend the instructions also; this often helps the two of them to resolve their religious problems before conflicts begin. By studying Catholic teachings, the non-Catholic has time to consider the problems involved in marrying a Catholic and to freely change his mind if he so desires.

Even though a dispensation for a mixed marriage has been obtained from the Church, the spouses are not permitted, either before or after the marriage contracted before the Church, to go also to a non-Catholic minister for the purpose of giving or renewing their matrimonial consent or vows.

Both the State and the Church have regulations prohibiting close relatives from entering marriage. Such laws not only prevent certain hereditary dangers but also preserve

the wholesome social atmosphere among the family relationships. Relationship affecting marriage in the Catholic Church is twofold: by reason of blood (consanguinity), and by reason of affinity (arises from a valid marriage). Consanguinity is a relation between persons, based on carnal generation. It exists in the direct line, if one of the persons is the direct ancestor of the other; in the indirect line (collateral) if neither person is the direct ancestor of the other, but both are descended from a common source.

In the direct line of consanguinity, marriage is invalid between all the ancestors and descendants; and in the collateral line, marriage is invalid up to the third degree inclusive (or down to and including second cousins). The Church never dispenses in the direct line nor in the first degree of the collateral line.

Affinity may be defined as a relation between two persons of whom one is joined by a valid marriage to a blood relative of the other. Affinity in the direct line in any degree invalidates marriage; in the collateral line it invalidates marriage up to the second degree inclusive (the man, and the sister, first cousin, aunt or niece of the woman; the woman, and the brother, first cousin, uncle or nephew of the man).

In almost all of the states, the civil law of consanguinity is similar to the law of the Church. In those states where the civil law of affinity is present, one must study the respective law to know how it affects a marriage.

If you baptize a person, or act as

sponsor for a person being baptized, you contract a spiritual relationship with that person, and it is an impediment to marriage. Dispensations are readily granted for good reason from this impediment.

In spite of all the Church's precautions some marriages do not turn out well. Temporary or permanent separation becomes necessary and is justified if one of the parties leads a life of crime, or is so vicious that the life, health, or spiritual welfare of the partner is threatened, or commits adultery, etc. In cases of separation the injured party should have permission from the Bishop to live for a long time apart from the guilty party. Such a permission is obtained through the parish priest. The reason for such a permission is to bring the case to the attention of Church officials so that every possible effort might be made to resolve the difficulties and restore nuptial harmony.

Unhappy people separate. Sometimes it is necessary that civil action be taken to insure property rights, regulate the support and custody of the children, etc. Even in such cases, no civil action should be taken until the Bishop has been consulted. Moreover, every Catholic must understand that neither separation nor civil divorce (obtained for its mere civil effects) confers the right to remarriage while the partner lives.

Some persons desire more than separation and so they ask, "Can my marriage be annulled or dissolved?" An annulment does not mean that the Church makes null something that was valid. An annulment in the Catholic Church—more properly

called a decree of nullity—is a declaration that there was not a true marriage from the beginning, even though it may have had all the outward appearances of being one. A true marriage is never contracted if some invalidating law makes the marriage null, if the parties themselves make conditions contrary to the substance of the marriage contract, if one or both are forced to marry, if one of the parties is a Catholic and the marriage does not take place before a Catholic priest, etc. Only when the fact of nullity is established does the Church give a declaration of nullity.

Sometimes the Church dissolves marriages for the good of souls, when such dissolution is possible. The only marriages which cannot be dissolved under any circumstances are the valid, consummated marriages of two baptized people. Most Christian marriages are in this class. No power on earth can dissolve the consummated bond of a sacramental marriage. But if the marriage is not consummated, or if it is not sacramental, then on the authority of the Church it may be dissolved for good and sufficient reason, and under limited conditions.

There are three types of marriages which can sometimes be dissolved:

1. Marriages which are valid and sacramental but have never been consummated by marital relationship between the husband and wife. Such cases are rare, and sufficient proof difficult to establish. When non-consummation is proven, reconciliation is impossible, and grave reasons urge, then the Holy Father

dissolves the union.

2. Marriages between *two unbaptized* persons. Such marriages can be dissolved only when one party becomes a Catholic and the other party refuses to live peacefully with the convert. This is called the "Pauline Privilege" because St. Paul first promulgated it as a means of protecting the faith of his converts (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

3. Privilege of the Faith or the Petrine Privilege. When one party to a marriage is baptized and the other is certainly unbaptized, their marriage may be a valid contract, but it is not a sacrament. In theory it can be dissolved, and in practice the Church will dissolve it in certain limited circumstances, usually involving the conversion of one party to the Catholic Church, the refusal of the other party to live with the convert, and convincing proof of the nonbaptism of one party.

For information on marriage as a sacrament, we recommend our free pamphlet entitled, "*The Real Secret of Successful Marriage*, free upon request.

Catholic marriages take place at Mass. Mixed marriages, between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, must take place before a priest but the Mass is not permitted. The Bishop is entitled to permit for mixed marriages those ceremonies which he judges advisable.

Catholic marriages seldom take place during Lent or Advent because the solemn nuptial blessing, ordinarily given at Mass, is not permitted during those seasons of penance, though the Bishop may permit the solemnization of matrimony

(Mass and Blessing) at any period of the year for a just cause. Catholic marriages do not usually take place on Sundays or holydays because the priests are all busy saying Mass for the parishioners. Likewise Catholic marriages are held before noon, because the nuptial Mass may seldom begin later than one o'clock.

Can a Catholic couple have non-Catholic attendants at a marriage ceremony in the Church? It is the mind of the Church that non-Catholics should not be attendants, but the Bishop may permit it for a serious reason and provided scandal is not given.

The Church has no law forbidding interracial marriages. There are no objections to such marriages on moral or religious grounds. However, in our country prejudice presents many practical difficulties to the success of such a marriage, particularly between negroes and whites. These social difficulties, as well as differences in attitude, background, and temperament should be given due consideration. Marriage is for life, and the odds against its success should be kept at a minimum.

Though there is a somewhat complicated system of laws in the Church that govern marriages and marriage "cases," still the marriage laws of the Church are fewer than in any single American state or foreign country. In practice, one wishing information about the marriage regulations of the Church should simply consult the parish priest. Only in the light of all the circumstances which pertain to a particular marriage case can the priest provide the information desired.

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